**University of Alberta**

# Identity Formation and Consciousness with Reference to Northern Alberta Cree and Metis Indigenous Peoples

by

Cora Weber-Pillwax

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

First Nations Education

Department of Educational Policy Studies

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring, 2003

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisisitons et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

*Your file Votre référence*
*ISBN: 0-612-82179-X*
*Our file Notre référence*
*ISBN: 0-612-82179-X*

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou aturement reproduits sans son autorisation.

**Canada**

**University of Alberta**

**Library Release Form**

**Name of Author**: Cora Weber-Pillwax

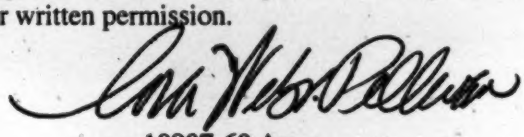
**Title of Thesis**: Identity Formation and Consciousness with Reference to Northern Alberta Cree and Metis Indigenous Peoples

**Degree**: Doctor of Philosophy

**Year this Degree Granted**: 2003

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as herein before provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.



10907-60 Ave,
Edmonton, AB T6H 1H8

**Date:** January 31, 2003

**University of Alberta**

**Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research**

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis *Identity Formation and Consciousness with Reference to Northern Alberta Cree and Metis Indigenous Peoples* submitted by Cora Weber-Pillwax in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in First Nations Education.

Dr. Stan Wilson, co-supervisor

Dr. Marilyn Assheton-Smith, co-supervisor

Dr. A.D. Fisher, committee member

Dr. Carl Urion, committee member

Dr. David G Smith, committee member

Dr. Mary Hampton, external examiner

Date: January 31, 2003

## ABSTRACT

This work draws out connections between identity formation and consciousness and the survival of Indigenous peoples. Identity, consciousness, and being are concepts described in the context of Indigenous personal and social reality in Northern Alberta. Because the presence of the ancestors is implied and embedded in Indigenous identity formation, the concept of intergenerationality is presented as a core aspect of identity formation processes for Northern Cree and Metis peoples. Observations are made also to connect identity formation with environmental elements including land, education systems, economics and governing systems, languages, values and spirituality.

To contextualize a focus on Indigenous bush/woodlands consciousness, reference is made to two models of consciousness. The Plains model of consciousness is commonly represented by a circle, a symbol grounded in the lifeworld of the Plains peoples. The Woodlands or Bush model of consciousness is commonly figured as a trail, a symbol grounded in the lifeworld of the Bush peoples. To bring into the foreground the underlying questions of Indigenous survival, narratives of lived experiences are shared along with a corresponding hermeneutic process of interpretation and analysis of those lived experiences. The work proposes that any discourse relating to the education of Indigenous children must centre on Indigenous descriptions of Indigenous experiences, descriptions that are ontological and epistemological in nature, and presented in relationship with Indigenous identity formation and consciousness development. This approach would ensure a sense of balance in the face of the shifting foundation of legal definitions and socially assigned categories of identity that presently form a significant part of contemporary Indigenous reality.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many persons to whom I owe a great deal for their support and encouragement through the process of living and writing this work. To all of you, thank you.

To Dr. Marilyn Assheton-Smith for being there beside me through everything in my life during the past years. To Dr. Carl Urion for always being my friend and adviser in difficult matters. To Dr. Stan Wilson for being the wise and knowledgeable teacher of the intricacies of the Cree language and the Cree mind. To Dr. Tony Fisher and Dr. David Smith for being there for that final round and contributing and helping me to reach beyond the work itself.

The persons who lived with me and cared with me as I wrote this dissertation are too many to name but know that you are all in my heart as you have always been. To all the persons whose words and ideas and lives have inspired me and given me the words to write, this work is yours.

Some of these persons whom I will to name in appreciation and honour for their direct support are: Harold and Eliza Roe, Leon Roe, Leo Roe, James Auger, Caroline Auger, Honorine Gladue, Victor Gladue, Noel Boskoyous, C. Boskoyous, Charlie Boskoyous, Sophie Boskoyous, Mélanie Laboucan, Art Blessé, Maryanne Blessé, Chillouis Wapoose, Lauralyn Houle, Sarah Price, Carolyn Merkle, Constant Auger, Alphonse Beaver, Isadore Cardinal, Arthur Pruden, Evelyn Pruden, Eva Ladouceur, Fred Pruden, Lois Edge, Paul Hernou, Fr. Vandersteen, Lawrence Cunningham, Norah Cunningham, Jean-Guy Goulet.

The special people whom I live for and will not name are also to be honoured for the impact that their lives have had in the living and bringing forth of this work. Without these beloved of my heart, I probably would not have written: my children, my grandchildren, my students

# TABLE OF CONTENTS


**PREFACE** ..... 1

THE OFFERING ..... 1

**CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION** ..... 2

TO BEGIN ..... 2

IDENTITY, CONSCIOUSNESS, BEING ..... 2

NONLINEAR (CHAOTIC) BRAIN DYNAMICS AND CONSCIOUSNESS ..... 6

INTERGENERATIONALITY ..... 7

**CHAPTER TWO: FORMULATING AND ESTABLISHING THE RESEARCH FOCUS** ..... 12

THE SEARCH FOR THE QUESTION ..... 12

TERMINOLOGY AND FOUNDATIONS FOR A STUDY OF INDIGENOUS IDENTITY AND CONSCIOUSNESS ..... 16

**CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY** ..... 25

METHODS AND STRATEGIES OF RESEARCH PROCESS ..... 25

*Background* ..... 25

*Literature as Data* ..... 25

*Involvement of Research Participants* ..... 26

*Selecting a Research Approach* ..... 27

*The Phenomenological Aspect in Indigenous Research Methodology* ..... 29

*Ethnographical Aspects in Indigenous Research Methodology* ..... 32

*Aspects of Participatory Action Research in Project Research Methodology* ..... 37

*Principles of Indigenous Research Methodology* ..... 41

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS ..... 44

**CHAPTER FOUR: WEAVING CONNECTIONS TO A LITERATURE** ..... 48

CATEGORY 1: THEORIES OF CONSCIOUSNESS ..... 48

CATEGORY 2: PSYCHO-SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF IDENTITY FORMATION AND CONSCIOUSNESS ..... 74

CATEGORY 3: ETHNOGRAPHIES AND NARRATIVES OF NORTHERN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ..... 80

**CHAPTER FIVE: LOCATING THE RESEARCHER** ..... 88

HERMENEUTICS AND PHENOMENOLOGY OF METIS BEING ..... 88

*Disputed Territory and Identity* ..... 88

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL IDENTIFICATION OF METIS ..... 91

*History* ..... 92

*Legislation Affecting Metis in Alberta* ..... 98

*Being Metis In the Isolated Communities - Other Metis and Other Lands* ..... 115

**CHAPTER SIX: INTERGENERATIONALITY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TO INDIGENOUS IDENTITY** ..... **126**

CEREMONIES THAT MAINTAIN INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS ..... 126
THE WIHKOHTOWIN IN THE CONTEXT OF HISTORICAL TRAUMA AND HEALING ..... 129
THE POWER OF WORDS AND LANGUAGE IN SHAPING IDENTITY AND CONSCIOUSNESS ..... 131
ORALITY CONSCIOUSNESS ..... 139
*The Power of the Word in the Articulation of an Indigenous Reality* ..... *141*
THE CONTINUITY OF ORALITY CONSCIOUSNESS ..... 150

**CHAPTER SEVEN: LIFEWORLDS AS REFLECTIONS OF CONSCIOUSNESS** ..... **156**

MODELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS: THE UNDERPINNINGS OF IDENTITY ..... 156
*Introduction* ..... *156*
*Background* ..... *157*
THE CIRCLE OF THE PLAINS ..... 159
*Introduction* ..... *159*
*Black Elk Speaks about Wounded Knee* ..... *161*
THE TRAILS OF THE FOREST AND TUNDRA ..... 173
*Introduction* ..... *173*
*Trails and Maps, Dreams, Markers and Stories* ..... *174*

**CHAPTER EIGHT: BRINGING THE THREADS TOGETHER** ..... **184**

IMAGES OF INDIANS ..... 184
PERSPECTIVES ON PERSONAL LOCATION THEORY ..... 185
NATIONHOOD AS A MODEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS ..... 187
ITERATIONS OF VIOLENCE ..... 190
THE URBAN BUSH ..... 192
IN ANTICIPATION OF CHANGE ..... 193
SYNCHRONIC APPROACHES TO MEANING ..... 194
CLOSURE ..... 196

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** ..... **197**

## PREFACE

### THE OFFERING

This work represents the foundation for research into the processes associated with identity formation and consciousness as lived out and displayed amongst my own people, the Indigenous Metis and Bush/Woodland Cree of Northern Alberta. The concept of intergenerationality is introduced as the core active presence in these fundamental human processes. Although the words I have chosen to frame this discussion are mine, many people have willingly contributed to the many dialogues leading to a deeper understanding of *who* we are and *why* we are Indigenous Metis/Cree people. This thesis is based on an individual life experience on the trail of a collective journey of understanding.

Embedded within the descriptions of personal experiences lies the trail that I follow, a trail that winds its way through a wilderness of European and Indigenous thought. This thesis represents a significant pause at a significant place along that trail. Like the *manitoukans*[1] of our ancestors, this work is intended to give thanks to the Creator and to invite all others who pass this way to also give thanks and expression to the respect that we hold for all life, including that of the past, present and future, the invisible and the visible. This part of my work is now completed, and I leave beside the trail this expression of my present understanding of identity formation and consciousness in the everyday lives of my people, the Cree and Metis of Northern Alberta.

---

[1] Manitoukan was a likeness of the Creator/God, built at significant sites along the trails used by the Northern peoples, especially the trappers and hunters. Places and reasons for making manitoukans and by whom might best be likened to who, why and where shrines and churches have been and continue to be built. Manitoukans are discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

### TO BEGIN

This discussion of identity formation and consciousness from within an Indigenous perspective required an approach based on a constant awareness of the multiple layers of actions and meanings as they evolved in separate forms of linearity simultaneously caught within matrices or constellations of interconnected relationships. Standard research actions of recording, writing, and analysing occurred within the framework of an Indigenous reality, but at least one description of the research process and outcomes had to fit within the parameters and standards established by Western definitions of social science research if the work was to be accepted as contemporary scholarship. Imaging the objects of these processes of recording, writing, and analysing in their state of active relationship to each other simultaneously as imaging the processes themselves in a state of interactive relationship elicits the notion of cascading fractals (MacCormac and Stamenov1996, p.324-325) caught within constellations of individuality or collectivity. Both the actions inherent to the processes and the objects involved and evolving from the processes simultaneously contribute to the shaping of identity and the transformation of consciousness. While in the development of this text, such shaping and transformation might be immediately evident to the researcher simply as a part of lived experience in 'doing' the project, the underlying principle that arises and threads its way through the text is that multiple forms and levels of interactive relationships give rise to identity and consciousness as distinct but inseparable elements of being.

### IDENTITY, CONSCIOUSNESS, BEING

In this work, "identity", "consciousness", and "being" are concepts around which I have built a discussion of Indigenous personal and social reality in Northern Alberta. These concepts become the pivotal points for discussion purposes, but always within the awareness that Indigenous personal and social reality exists in a perpetual state of continuous interactive relationship that crosses the boundaries of time and space. For the individual, this state of perpetual relationship results in a personal sense of fluidity around notions of identity and consciousness.

This sense of fluidity is reflected in the social emphasis that Northern peoples tend to place on acceptance and respect for individual views and forms of expression. Even in situations where prescribed or specific rituals may commonly be taught and learned as significant parts of traditional ceremonies, a learner would not be challenged if s/he changed something in the ritual when s/he was offering/making the ceremony. The teacher(s) and community members would accept the explanation for modification if one was offered, and the individual would proceed with the ceremony according to his/her personal experiences of learning and spiritual preparation.

I may be told through a dream, for instance, to make a sweat lodge in a certain manner and space. I would be expected to proceed to do exactly that, whether the directions fit with "traditional" teachings and practices or not. Although the teachers/elders are respected as the historians and guides for individual and collective development, they do not challenge or in any way coerce an individual to express his/her own spirituality in any particular way, especially where visions and dreams have guided otherwise. Spiritual practices are not described or taught in prescriptive ways by "traditional" teachers. Personal experiences and shared narratives show that social interactions amongst Northern Cree and Metis continue to demonstrate the high value that is accorded to individual autonomy in decision-making. This ethic of supreme respect for individual choice and action is consistent even in matters of traditional ceremonies and practices.

It is worth noting that this form of respect has not diminished the traditional practice of passing on from one generation to another the responsibility to sponsor particular traditional ceremonies such as the *wihkohtowin* for the people as a collective. In other words, the dichotomy of 'the individual' versus 'the collective' does not exist in exactly the way that it is sometimes presented by Western interpretations of Indigenous practices and relationships. To the Northern Cree, the notion that the individual is expected to 'give up' or 'sacrifice' personal/individual objectives or goals for the 'good' of the collective/ 'tribe' is a foreign concept. The language might sound "right", and in some cases, even be used in explanations, but it doesn't work that way in daily living.

The individual is always accorded the highest respect in matters of personal choices and actions, and the collective thrives when individuals make choices that support all living

beings including self. There is no dichotomy. The collective is continually in a process of creation and re-creation through the choices that individuals are continuously making. As long as the choices support life, the collective lives; when individual choices no longer support all living things, then the collective weakens.

Within this all-encompassing state of continuous interactive relationship lie multiple constellations of interactive relationships. As in the individual and the collective, the many form the one while, at the same time, the many are each independent and whole within themselves. The boundaries of each one of these distinct sets of relationships shift continuously as well, according to individual life experiences, events, and personal interpretations of these experiences into new meanings.

It is these different combinations of interactive relationships with their shifting boundaries that supply the material for the various states of consciousness and the development of a sense of being *and* a sense of individual identity. Consciousness attends to identity or attends to being, and to which consciousness attends is determined by the physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental states of the person as s/he is located within a particular time and space and within a particular constellation of interactive relationships. The advanced teachers have learned to direct consciousness to identity or being in response to life experiences and life situations. These teachers can help learners to acquire such knowledge through the use of planned events in specifically selected and/or designed spaces and times.

Consciousness in attending identity can, at a given point, encompass being, or, similarly, consciousness in attending being can, at a given moment, encompass identity. In the first case, identity by encompassing being is preeminent as the determiner and interpreter of life's experiences. In the second case, being is preeminent as the determiner and interpreter of life's experiences.

Two examples might put some grounding to these words. In the first case, a man is caught up in a Board discussion to build a new school and is only conscious of the maps and theoretical designs in front of him. His *being* is subsumed in his thinking and his imagination; therefore, his identity is the only avenue for interpreting and responding to this situation. He thinks his way through to a response with information, facts, and

policies. Alternatively, he can totally rely on his emotions to think through to a response; the difference here is that his thinking may be challenged as unclear because of it is being guided by his emotions. In this scenario, responses are based on the man's own sense of his identity, expressed through his thinking.

In the second case, a woman is in a sweatlodge and seeking guidance on a personnel issue. The heat of the sweatlodge demands a refocus of consciousness and in this situation the personnel issue fades. The woman's consciousness attends to a particular sense of *being* and as consciousness attends to *being*, identity is subsumed along with any images or interpretations of the issue. After this process, the woman will very likely contextualize the issue differently because the total experience has precipitated a different set of interactive relationships. She is no longer limited to interpreting the issue from the boundaries of her identity. The scenarios can easily be reversed with the man attending to *being* and the woman focusing on identity. Individual responses to any situation are based entirely on individual choices and capacities around consciousness, identity and being.

This work indirectly asserts that Indigenous notions of *identity* cannot be articulated without reference to an understanding of and/or an articulation of the notion of *being*. Identity does not exist in Indigenous thought as something apart from or disconnected from being, and to speak of identity is to recognize and speak of being. Yet, these are also recognized as two distinct elements of a human. In the way that the English language uses the words *identity* and *being*, the words seem held to be synonymous. *Being* is understood as embedded in and inherent to the meaning of *identity*. This notion is so strongly ingrained in English-language usage that most English-language speakers display an aversion to the use of the word *being* in any form other than as a derivative of the verb *to be*. The noun form of the word is rarely used or given any significant consideration in English-language discourse in any context except perhaps in some circles of philosophy or religious studies. In contrast, this discourse on identity and consciousness from an Indigenous perspective, cannot cohere without some focus on the notion of *being* as it relates to the concepts of identity and consciousness.

Since I am not speaking as a philosopher, I am not intending to construct a philosophical discussion or primary discourse around the word *being*. I am merely attempting to contextualize the use of the word *being* in this work so as to prepare the reader for later sections that require a direct elaboration of the concept as a significant and crucial element of the discussion. In those sections, I have tried to articulate and give some form to the mesh that represents the actualities of identity, being, and consciousness as they have come together in my conceptualization of Indigenous reality.

## NONLINEAR (CHAOTIC) BRAIN DYNAMICS AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Recent writings compiled by MacCormac and Stamenov (1996) discuss the application of advanced technical and theoretical knowledge to the study of consciousness and consciousness research. These articles promise to open up the conceptual and language barriers that have traditionally inhibited or prevented any meaningful dialogue between Western and Indigenous scholars around the topic of Indigenous theories of consciousness and mind. Further, such works using the language associated with fractal geometry and nonlinear (chaotic) dynamics in the development of consciousness can be useful in additional research to refine and/or elucidate an Indigenous perspective on identity and consciousness. MacCormac and Stamenov provide an excellent introduction to the thinking of Western scientists who are grappling with theories and models of brain/mind and consciousness research. The challenging concepts discussed in these chapters introduce the possibility for a new and exciting dialogue between Indigenous and Western scholars. Initiating a dialogue that uses research developments in Euro-Western theories of mathematics, physics and medical sciences to frame a discourse on Indigenous theories of consciousness might be one way to make clear what has seemingly been almost incomprehensible to "Western" thinking.

Indigenous notions of consciousness have not been widely nor well understood by non-Indigenous peoples. This may be true partly because what has been available whether orally or in print tends to present information in a style or format that is unfamiliar and, therefore, usually indecipherable. Such formats include stories, narratives, metaphor, traditional forms of "texts", ceremonies, rituals, specific ways of interacting and ways of being. These ways of presenting information can describe and simultaneously be examples of the iterative and fractal nature of the dynamics involved in Indigenous

theories and experiences of consciousness. In most circumstances, such information is incomprehensible because both content and related processes are foreign to the intended recipient. This is especially true where such persons are not direct participants in Indigenous ways of being and engaging in discourse. In some of these cases, however, having the appropriate English-language vocabulary to articulate content in a style of communication that is supportive of dialogue across two forms of consciousness would be very helpful. I am seeing such a possibility in the use of vocabulary evolving from fractal geometry and non-linear chaotic dynamics to discuss consciousness research. Although this approach seems to offer excellent potential for the development of a theoretical framework that would support an Indigenous perspective, this is not presently my research focus.

What is relevant to my own work and topic of research is that contemporary science is pushing aside and expanding the boundaries of thought that have imprisoned and inhibited non-Indigenous comprehension of Indigenous theories and Indigenous thought on any topic, including identity and consciousness. This whole project has been a search for appropriate English-language vocabulary, firstly to understand in English, and secondly, to articulate and give expression in English to my own understanding of Indigenous theories of consciousness and identity. Thirdly, it is my hope that this work will contribute to an Indigenous academic discourse that is being conducted in the English language on Indigenous theories of identity formation and consciousness.

This is a tremendous and highly significant challenge for all Indigenous scholars because many Indigenous persons, especially contemporary youth, are unilingual in the English language. They find themselves struggling to understand their own sense of who they are because they have not found the words that 'fit' with how they are experiencing themselves to be. These people and this situation provided the driving force behind this work.

## INTERGENERATIONALITY

The focus of this work is the aspect of intergenerationality as the core of Indigenous identity formation. The selection of this focus is based on personal observations and personal lived experiences within an Indigenous social reality that is perhaps most

accurately depicted and understood as a state of war and violence. Indigenous peoples live out their lives in complete awareness that their lifeworlds are embedded within a larger and more powerful social reality. That in itself does not necessarily pose any threat or create any sense of tension. However, there can be no dispute from any quarter that the evidence of individual and collective trauma and stress amongst Indigenous peoples in Canada continues to grow. Such trauma for Indigenous peoples began early in the periods of 'history' after European policies positioned foreign settlers and Indigenous inhabitants of this continent in a relationship of colonialism. Public school curricula and teachers locate and identify this initial moment of 'relationship' as "first contact".

The effects of the "first contact" concept has long tentacles, and these stretch into the identity formation processes and consciousness of all children. The schools present Canadian history from the European perspective where "first contact" is taken to mean that the "Indians" had never been in contact with "Whites" prior to the arrival of European explorers. An equally valid point of view is to understand "first contact" to mean that the "Whites" had never been in contact with "Indians". This re-focusing of direction and meaning in relation to perspective is rarely if ever pointed out to schoolchildren. Nonetheless, the significance and effects of such positioning on identity formation processes of children are obvious. This should raise questions about accountability and responsibility of school administrations to consider carefully the negative impacts that one-sided teacher or curricular positioning has on Indigenous children who are descendants of those original "Indians" represented in the "first contact" theory.

The information that is needed for a more accurate and unbiased view of the "first contact" theory is easily accessible to contemporary educators. Nonetheless, the term continues to be used, usually in the one-directional sense, at all levels of education. At a basic level of knowledge and professional accountability for the well-being of students, educators need to inform themselves so as to take a broader and more critical perspective around the teaching of the "first contact" theory.

The narrow view that human mobility in Indigenous populations occurred only in relation to availability of basic needs such as food and shelter and in relation to technological

advancements in transportation modes is both ignorant and demeaning. Such a view ignores some basic facts about Indigenous realities and implies others. One significant example of omission is that it ignores the fact that Indigenous systems of mobility and travel were not limited to technologies and the developments associated with the physical sciences. Indigenous persons had been in 'contact' with "Whites" long before the formal "first contact" described in most history textbooks. These Indigenous experiences of first contact with people not indigenous to their lands are related in the narratives and traditional teachings (some referred to as prophecies) within particular Indigenous cultural societies themselves. Such information is not generally made available through schooling institutions. It has been well-documented in social science research that Indigenous explorers and seekers of knowledge were not restricted to travel and "mobility" on the physical plane (Brody, Brown 1988 &1992, Goulet, Helm, Ridington) but this research too tends to be ignored or treated as myth, fantasy, or mere "anthropological" description by most educators. Other stories describe patterns of trade and communication interactions amongst various peoples scattered over this and other continents. These stories too have come primarily through the social sciences, and are largely ignored.

Perhaps more significant to contemporary identity formation processes for Indigenous children is that the "first contact" view projects and promotes an image that "Indians" were savages or naïve children, standing in wide-eyed awe at the "arrival" of the "White" man. This further implies that the evolution of Indigenous consciousness and identity was then at the stage of "me hungry – find moose – kill moose – feed gods – feed family". In today's reality, the talk on the streets about "Whites" and "Indians" discloses that this historical perception of Indigenous peoples persists to a frightening degree. To what degree this attitude is initiated and supported in school experiences has not been researched or quantified. Based on my experiences and first-hand observations as teacher and administrator, I believe that schools perpetuate and contribute to such views in ways that most educators are not even aware of. I also know from experience that most educators will vehemently deny their participation or contribution to such views and attitudes when and if they are challenged. The effects of the "first contact" theory will die hard in our public policies and therefore in our school practices. In the meantime,

Indigenous children and parents will continue to struggle along that hard trail towards the fulness of Indigenous identity and consciousness. They have no other choice because that is the human journey of being.

In this analysis of that journey, intergenerationality as the core aspect of identity and consciousness for Cree and Metis peoples will serve as the underlying principle that shapes the theories, determines the discourse, drives the consciousness, and ensures the survival of the people. The chapters themselves represent a continuous flow of meaning that is intended to lead the reader through created images of one reality into the integration of new data with its accompanying expansion of consciousness. In other words, we as writer/reader will undertake an iterative journey, through narrative/discourse, experiencing life together as a deterministic chaotic system stretching out and folding back on itself in self-reinforcing loops (Van Eenwykin in MacCormac &Stamenov, 1996, p. 330). However, unlike the computational effects of iterative equations where the conclusions can be extremely unpredictable, in this case of iteration in discourse that denotes the flow of life experiences and interpretations, I as writer am aware of a destination while you as reader are permitted to enjoy the 'free-fall' experience of iteration without a predictable destiny (MacCormac & Stamenov, 1996, p.331).

This non-predictability of outcomes is a significant characteristic of iteration as defined by MacCormac & Stamenov. Although this writing provided me an experience of iteration with its stretches and folds in self-reinforcing loops, it was this characteristic of non-predictability that rose to my awareness most often. In a general and even somewhat superficial sense, the intended outcome of this whole experience has been a unified printed text. However, of equal, if not more significance to me, the process of doing the work was also an opportunity to experience transformation of personal consciousness without any form of awareness or knowledge about the outcome of such movement (development).

This non-predictability of outcomes was revealed also in the processes associated with the "data collection" phase of this work. I am not intending to focus on the iterative nature of the data collection process but it is a topic that I believe warrants intensive study, especially in relation to Indigenous research and scholarship. Generally, past

observations and experiences would lead me to expect that Indigenous researchers would be more likely to practice unorthodox (compared to "Western" science) methods and strategies in data collection, even though their descriptions of the processes would likely be perceived and received as typical of standard research data collecting practices. This is not to suggest that there is any intent on the parts of Indigenous researchers to mislead, or that there is something unethical happening. It is simply to indicate and, in a way, to generalize past observations that Indigenous researchers will likely rely on a number of different, and perhaps unusual, approaches to the flow of life experiences associated with their research context. However, their descriptions pertaining to such approaches may not necessarily present them as anything unorthodox or unusual.

In relation to my own research process and work, much of the new data came to me through non-linear or a causal processes. Many of the texts and much oral data came to my attention without recognizably causal determination or causally motivated sequences of action or thought. Other pieces, especially significant interactions/conversations with other persons, came seemingly propelled through their own iterative sequences, having their origins in unknown or unknowable sources. In this work, I present these unknowable sources as our ancestors[2]. They are the origins or starting point of the knowledge that is available to us. They are the source of vitality for the relationship between ego (and identity) which gather and interpret life experiences and consciousness which integrates this new data into understanding and being, the fractal cascade that never stops growing (Van Eenwyk in MacCormac &Stamenov, 1996, p.337). Intergenerationality, then, names this vital connection between our ancestors and us – a vital connection that guides the dynamics of everyday life and shapes individual consciousness.

---

[2] I have to say "our" ancestors because in my values and principles of being, we are all related and that principle stands true for all. In this project, I am aware that I am discussing my own interpretations of Indigenous identity formation processes and consciousness, but in order to maintain the integrity of the meaning of the word "ancestors" as well as the integrity of my own values, in this case, I must use the word "our", rather than "my" in connection with the term "ancestors". I am not referring to "biological" descent.

## CHAPTER TWO: FORMULATING AND ESTABLISHING THE RESEARCH FOCUS

### The Search for the Question

I have spent the last decade trying to understand why and how it is that Indigenous people have survived the constant state of war in which they have lived since the arrival on this continent of the non-Indigenous European "investors" and "settlers". For many more years, this perplexity around Indigenous survival has been replaced with a very strong intuitive knowledge that clarification lay in some form of explication of the processes of identity formation and/or the forms of Indigenous consciousness. As the years went by, many observations and personal experiences affirmed and validated this intuition and I began to seriously consider how to begin such a process to explication something so ephemeral as identity formation and consciousness from an Indigenous perspective. This thesis then is an attempt to draw out the connections between identity formation and consciousness and the survival of Indigenous peoples. In attempting to formulate a research question, the one condition that I imposed was that the question had to encompass those aspects that already seemed to be an important part of the answer. I decided to work with Cree and Metis persons in northern Alberta and to focus on those elements of consciousness and identity formation that connect individuals inter-generationally across space and time.

I knew that any efforts to re-phrase the topic into a research question would result in the creation of layers upon layers of answers, in complete ignorance and dismissal of as many other and related questions. The epitome of naiveté sprang to mind: Little Red Riding Hood on a sun-filled morning deciding to go for a walk to Grandma's house was not seeking questions. Like most people, the focus of her world was on answers. I was rather old, having made many trips to Grandma's house and slaughtered many wolves, when I realized that answers are easy to understand once there is a question.

The scraping voice of Marianne Faithful in the blackness and loneliness of a northern night on the open road:

> "Jesus Christ could take me there,
> I'd have no questions for His answers".

Her words triggered a shocking possibility: an answer can exist without a related question.

I remember being aware of a crinkling and a shattering, along with an awareness of a consciously shifting to a state of observing in order to retrieve a sense of internal balance. I remember watching the twirling and spinning patterns of words and images, lost now in one half of a once-familiar dialectic of first question, then answer. I braked to slow down, aware that I needed enough attention to maintain control of the vehicle and simultaneously hold and not break my connection with the gathering momentum of some major internal event. Before me was a wolf that I could never have imagined and my whole being hung suspended, immovable, awaiting direction. What was the shattering? From which direction came the movement and to which direction was it going? What was the shape of this wolf before me? There was nothing familiar about any part of this experience except the state of immobility and instinctual preparedness to meet an unknown.

My sense of time collapsed and my sense of space was a fragile balance; mental order was consumed by shifting masses of concept pieces and partial definitions. I held on to an order of consciousness, trying to stay with the waves of words and afraid to lose connection with them by concentrating on them – a part of me remembering that to 'see' the horizon is not to look at it. Very gradually the words slowed and I began to take charge of the ordering of thoughts. It came to me that this was consciousness experiencing itself at work, a totally internal experience with no corresponding expression or form in the external world of order in time and space. Returning to the ordinary linearity of logic and sequencing of thoughts, I struggled to articulate and commit the event to words and memory. An awareness of the dark fields moving past my window, the yellow line on the highway and the headlights of the oncoming cars informed me that I was back in the real world of highway and moving vehicle. For a while, I maintained a slower speed, repeating the words to myself until the meanings

were embedded so deeply in my mind that I was certain I would be able to recall the experience at will.[3]

Since that time, I have traveled many miles with that wolf. There was no enemy there, only something shrouded in the darkness, fabricated by limited thinking strategies in which I had been very well schooled. Since that experience, I have begun to formally assign recognition to those answers that are meaningful and necessary in my own life. In other words, I am conscious of answers that appear before I have formulated the question. Now I am engaged in a different search, hunting and on the lookout for the questions that are tied to those answers. Since that moment in the darkness of the open highway, I have not been able to rely with complete confidence on the logic implied within the accepted and learned cognitive sequence of 'first question, then answer'. I have found instead that when I recognize an answer to be potentially significant in my life and to my reality, then I must meet the challenge it poses of finding the right and corresponding question. This is absolutely essential if that answer that is already waiting for me is to become meaningfully integrated into my personal lived experience or into my consciousness as lived experience. In this particular system of learning, the logical sequence would be 'first answer, then question'.

This logical sequence of answer-question forms the pattern for the foundation of my thinking and research methodology. The formulation of a research question is a concrete indication that I have chosen to recognize one question as that one which will, above all others, be more likely to make sense of all those answers that I have managed to collect and live through. The challenge to this particular model of learning lies in the capacity of the researcher/seeker to recognize that one particularly significant answer when it arises or is revealed in the ongoing flow of personal life experiences. Answers come or are revealed in the most unexpected ways. Significant answers, I discovered in retrospect, had often been collected or formulated within me long before my thinking had discerned the questions that had evolved from my lived experiences.

---

[3] For a formal discussion analagous to this process, refer to Vandervert in MacCormac & Stamenov (1996) where he talks about "Einstein's epistemology" and "the role of intuition in the discovery of the axioms of science" as well as the sequencing of actions for "moving from the plane of experience to the axioms" (p.260-262).

The focus for this research project arose from such a process. I had always wondered how I could demonstrate for the disbelievers the destructive and insidious effects of schooling on Indigenous children, and inevitably therefore on Indigenous people, in general. During my years of involvement within the public school systems, my efforts seemed to be focused primarily on shielding and protecting children from personal mental, psychological, spiritual and, in some cases, physical annihilation. The strongest motivating factor to stay was a belief that I could make a difference; that as long as I stayed on my feet, another child might survive, another set of parents might be enabled to protect their children, another board member might find the personal strength and courage to keep struggling against the powerful forces of public schooling institutions to discover their own answers to the needs of their own communities and peoples.

Over the years, I had seen that I was living my life and working according to an answer that had come to me intuitively. Further, I had seen that no matter how difficult or negative, this answer was validated by almost all of my schooling experiences. The schooling process could indeed be very destructive, but there was obviously some one thing that kept the Indigenous child protected. Even where the individual child could not overcome the barriers to his/her own personal expression of being, nonetheless, the people had survived. How was this to be explained? Which set of terminology or which field of academic inquiry would I need to call upon to explain something which is so little understood that even the questions have not yet been devised?

I am now at this space in my life where I have committed to submitting to public scrutiny a formal analysis of the phenomenon of Indigenous peoples' survival under circumstances of prolonged siege and violence. I realize that I will probably never articulate the questions that this phenomenon answers, but a part of my thesis is that during this "working through" the answer, at least a few of the questions will become visible or audible. Despite this seeming uncertainty regarding the question-and-answer relationship that permeates most academic research projects, I have not ignored my own awareness that rationality as it is known in academia does not quickly, easily, or willingly accept an "answer" without having been walked through logical and prior "questions". The overt description of this process is generally accepted as the appropriate indicator of cognitive prowess and intellectual control over the research topic.

In this particular project, I have certainly not attempted to demonstrate control over the topic by asking questions. Firstly, I didn't know what questions to ask. Secondly, if I had known what questions to ask, I wouldn't have had to do this work. Thirdly, if I hadn't done this work, I would never have known any of the questions. It is the questions that arose from the work that brought me into a deeper connection with the answers, and at the same time, into the logic and language of time and space. The answer lay outside of the boundaries of time and space and what is normally perceived to be logic and rationality. It sat there as reality, accepted as reality, not requiring justification, explanation, or research to embed it into the linearity of discourse in logic, time and space. It sat there, unfathomable - Indigenous survival. The answer interpreted by one form of logic as 'it ought not and cannot be' and another form of logic as 'it always will be'. Getting to the questions around Indigenous survival demanded my re-immersion into lived experiences and a corresponding hermeneutic process of interpretation and analysis of those lived experiences and shared narratives of lived experiences.

**Terminology and Foundations for a Study of Indigenous Identity and Consciousness**

The articulation of the process of identity formation is an obvious challenge for philosophers and psychologists of every culture even though identity formation is accepted by human societies as a natural and necessary process for individual human development. This term, 'identity formation', implies that we become who we are as identities through some kind of a process. I intend to work with this assumption as if it were an accurate term naming a distinct process and describing, in some specific way, identifiable and visible elements within the process. At the same time, I accept that this term is simply another word to name a process about which we know very little: the process that answers *how* we become *who* and *what* we are. Questions around the concept of personal "identity" are complex and have not been answered in ways that permit transferability and applicability from one system of thought to another system of thought. To put it another way, one society's way of becoming or of being a "person" cannot easily be transferred, interpreted or understood to mean the same thing as another society's way of being or becoming a "person".

A person who identifies him/herself as a Cree person or a Metis person would be living the life of such a person as s/he has self-identified. In some communities, "White

person" is a recognized identity and that person who has identified him/herself as a "White person" would be living the life that springs from such a self-identification. In an isolated Indigenous community, it is common to observe a "White person" acting like a "White person". However, outside of the community, that same person no longer 'acts' like a "White person". S/he seems to take on a different identity. A "White person" doesn't exist except in relation to others who are non-"Whites", like "Indians" and "Natives". In the same way, an "Indian" doesn't exist except in relation to others who are non-"Indians", like "White persons". Each person as an identity is shaped by social and environmental factors and at the same time each person shapes, or attempts to shape the social and environmental factors according to self-perceptions and self-interpretations about self-identity.

To incorporate the notion of identity formation as a process into this active relationship of individual person/environment presents at least one obvious difficulty: identity formation is generally understood in reference specifically to the person; it is not often understood in reference to any form of the environment, whether socially or naturally constituted. However, since 'person' is only one part of the 'person/environment' dyad, then identity formation as a concept must somehow be expanded to include a reference to environment as well.

This expanded concept of identity formation lifts the restrictions that normally limit the concept's applicability to the person and the environment is recognized in identity formation processes as both a legitimate and active force as well as an acted-upon element. The definition and inherent meaning of identity formation is now moved beyond the confines of the person and includes the environment. This is accomplished not only by recognizing that the two parts, person and environment, are distinct and related but also by recognizing that identity formation flows from the one dyadic relationship in which the one part does not take precedence over the other. The person acts upon the environment (which includes other people as well as social and physical factors) with as much impact as the environment acts upon the person. Each is involved in shaping the other. This dyadic relationship moves the discussion beyond the standard position that recognizes explicitly how environment impacts and shapes identity, but

often neglects or ignores to point out that identity in turn impacts and shapes environment.

The complexity of identity formation is further intensified when we consider the variety and quantity of elements that constitute the environment of a person. The individual personal identity that is continuously being shaped is a reflection of the constantly shifting and transforming relationship between the individual and the various elements of the environment. These various elements of the environment//person dyad will be constantly changing from both internally driven and externally driven forces. The ethic of individualism tends to favour the notion that these environmental changes arise as a result of forces internally driven by the choices and intentions of the person. This supports the "man controls nature" view of the so-called "modern" world.

In the context of this discussion, however, the changes within the environment are, in most cases, brought about through externally driven forces such as power and hegemonic structures around language, philosophy, physical health, economics, and spirituality. To the degree that the forces generated by these social constructs can and do affect the relationships between the person and the environment is the degree to which the identity formation of a person is affected and even pre-determined by these same forces. A simple re-phrasing might be: "the degree that the environment is controlled is the degree to which identity is controlled". This raises an even more macabre specter than the scientist playing with a gene pool and affecting human reproduction since the results of these particular forms of control on identity are not readily available or accessible as public information or for scientific observations, interpretations, and reporting. It is probably a simple point of logic that such information is not available since those who 'control' some of the primary components of identity formation are in most cases those who 'control' most aspects of public information flow. Consider for example such cases as the "fall-out" from the years of government sanctioned and approved "Indian residential schooling" as well as large-scale programs of "sterilization" of the socially "unacceptable", "unworthy" and "unable".

This work considers the concept of identity formation in relation to the experiences of identity formation amongst some Indigenous peoples, and make observations on how

identity formation is connected with and affected by such additional environmental elements as physical geography including land, knowledge and education systems, economics and governing systems, languages, values and spirituality.

Stories of Indigenous lived experience can and have demonstrated that problematic around the process of identity formation underlies most of what has been identified as contemporary Aboriginal issues from any area of study. Despite the fact, however, that it is possible to trace and/or articulate a connection between identity formation and issues of Aboriginal social reality, it is more difficult, for a number of reasons, to explain how the processes of individual identity formation have been impacted by non-Aboriginal interference. I have approached this challenge by sharing my interpretations of various writings and by providing descriptions and information that evolved from personal interactions with Metis and Cree persons who are presently living through the processes of their own individual "identity formation". These narratives and interpretations of contemporary Indigenous experiences contribute directly to the elaboration and elucidation of Indigenous perspectives on "identity formation" processes and their attendant Indigenous models of "consciousness". These descriptions of Indigenous reality reflect the incorporation of environmental elements that are heavily weighted by non-Indigenous influence. It is to the credit of the spiritual strength and intellectual capacity of the Indigenous people themselves that the integrity of any form of an Indigenous model of identity formation is still operative and can be described from and with an appropriate context. The persons who speak in this work speak for all of us as Indigenous persons and thereby give evidence that we have survived and that our processes of identity formation have been successful in supporting and sustaining Indigenous life.

Grounding the research in the lives and words of real persons presents a simple approach that has permitted me to stay focused on the purpose of abstraction and theory. The research methodology was designed to ensure that the persons who are immersed in the realities of Indigenous "identity formation" processes would be the driving force of the research project. A Metis person "squatting" on Crown land and living with the memory of a vital Metis community situated on Metis land has lived through an identity formation process similar to that of a Metis person renting a house in a large city or to one living on

the "road allowance". All are potential participants in this research, and each has a narrative disclosing an individual process of identity formation and an individual sense of consciousness. Similar statements apply to the Cree persons whose narratives contributed to this research project. Those who agreed to be research participants were willing to accept the impact of the research process and outcomes on their own lives and the lives of their families.

To conclude this introduction, I will attempt to place this research into a more recognizable framework: that of Aboriginal, Native or Indigenous education. The literature addressing Indigenous education is an array of descriptions and explanations that recount the problematic nature of "Indian", Native, or Aboriginal schooling. Explanations have ranged from models of cultural and linguistic 'deficits' due to biological and racial cognitive inferiority to theories of cultural conflict and cultural discontinuity. Yet, very little seems to have changes for the Indigenous child in school. It continues to be my position that the phenomenon of a northern Indigenous child in a Canadian school is an anomaly somewhat similar to seeing a fish in a tree. Neither is prepared for the reality that must be faced or lived out. To survive, each would have to become a new being, but there is no guide for such a profound and basically impossible transformation. To analyze the nature of schooling for Indigenous children from this perspective requires more knowledge, experience, wisdom and compassion than most of us possess as individuals.

Inadequate explanations continue to address the complexity of the phenomenon of Indigenous children in contemporary schools as a problem, rather than as an anomaly. This "problem" perspective arises primarily because "formal" educators are forced into positions of responsibility and accountability to the state for the implementation and enforcement of legislated school attendance and participation. The constraints and accompanying pressures around time and resources to implement prescriptive forms of schooling in a society that espouses multicultural rights and freedoms for every member of its populace make it virtually impossible for educators to reflect seriously and address effectively those aspects of schooling that impact negatively on identity formation and psychological well-being of children in general, but more especially, that of Indigenous children. The extent to which educators consider the psychological needs of *any* children

remains an ongoing area of monitoring and contention between parents and school-based educators as well as between school board trustees and central administration officials. However, for those children who are members of a "minority" group, an "ethnic" group, an "Aboriginal" group, an "other" group, the monitoring of program, curriculum and pedagogy or the participation in formal debates and arguments are not a part of the usual parental repertoire for defense and participatory action in schooling. The result then is that the identity formation of the Indigenous child, of the "other" child, is unobtrusively set aside in order to focus attention on what is perceived to be the more pressing concerns of educating the child - concerns that are most often defined as problems associated with inadequate funding, second language learning, cultural differences, behaviour problems, counseling needs, below standard achievement, poor attendance, higher attrition rates.

In general, within the context of schooling, identity formation processes are not overtly recognized and addressed as significant to the psychological well-being of every individual child. Although the connections between identity formation processes and psychological wellness are obvious and widely accepted, school-based educators are rarely prepared to ground their standard school-based programs and curricula within the social reality or lifeworld of those children whom they perceive to be situated at the margins of the school society.

Instead, the historical development of what has been popularly termed 'Native Education' has followed and continues to follow a somewhat predictable pattern. As one set of solutions fail, new explanations are devised and another round of new solutions must be attempted[4]. This cycle can and will continue indefinitely unless educators and researchers begin to respect and accept that the complexity of the issues surrounding contemporary education for Indigenous peoples rests on Indigenous experiences of identity formation and consciousness. This means that educators or researchers working seriously in the field of Aboriginal education cannot permit themselves to indulge in the human tendency to be self-protective. We must stop defining problems and solutions into existence through interpretation and description of complexities we do not understand. Because the problem or the solution has usually been defined in a manner that places it outside the

[4]Non-Indigenous educators carry out most of the work done in relation to this pattern, a situation that carries its own distinct challenges and critiques.

Indigenous context, the response of Indigenous 'clients' is often non-supportive or non-existent, giving rise to the oft-cited claim by teachers and school administrators that "Aboriginal parents don't care" or the perception that Aboriginal people and communities are "apathetic". Unfortunately, it has also been my observation that, in many cases, what the Indigenous "client" thinks of the defined problem or solution is totally irrelevant anyway. The educator's acceptance or rejection of the Indigenous 'client' response will impact and determine to some degree the quality of school-community interaction in the future. Further, depending on personalities, politics, economics, and a myriad of other lifeworld and contextual realities, the Indigenous response to "outside-defined"[5] problems and solutions in schooling can be expressed somewhere along a spectrum ranging from absolute non-participation, aversion, and withdrawal to a mid-point of solid partnerships and collegiality across cultures to violent opposition and open conflict at the other end. These responses are surely not a whole lot different than what might be expected logically from any vital community of people struggling for survival as a community and a people.

The maintenance of a process of outside-defined problems and solutions in the schooling of Indigenous children guarantees that Indigenous education will not dramatically change. It also in a way legitimizes the claim from many educators at all levels that they are doing their best to educate Indigenous children in the face of very great challenges. What goes unnoticed and unaddressed in this approach is that these perceived "challenges" have been shaped in actuality through educators' own definitions and solutions. It is a model of self-perpetuation where understanding the issue is less important than defining or describing the problem and then shaping a solution to fit that problem. In other words, ask the question, find the answer. However, unless the complexity of the issue is perceived, it is impossible to formulate the right questions because contextualize the problems that give rise to know the right question in relation to the issue. The result of this ignorance coupled with pressures of administrative responsibility and accountability is that bureaucratic efficiency takes precedence over

---

[5] This term is along the lines of thought extremely well developed by Paul Chartrand of 'outside-naming' in relation to identities of Aboriginal peoples. See Chartrand in Journal of Indigenous Studies 2.2. (1991).

good teaching that supports effective learning. Through this, a complex and foundational issue in providing education for Indigenous children is ignored or relegated into the shadows of superficiality. Problems that reflect facets of the larger issue and in fact must be understood as developing out of the larger issue are described and inscribed within the rigid and limited structures of superficial questions and answers devised by educators who often have minimal or no knowledge of Indigenous experiences in relation to identity formation processes and consciousness development. Obvious examples would be "culture classes" (answer/solution) to address poor attendance and high attrition rates (question/problem), "native language classes" (solution/answer) to address peer racism and low self-esteem (problem/question), "elders" at school (solution/answer) to address the loss of traditional Indigenous values (question/problem).

Indigenous identity formation processes and forms of consciousness have borne and enabled generations of Indigenous individuals to transcend the trauma and violence that characterizes their societies - societies confined within the structures of a larger, more dominant society and engaged with that society in a continuous state of aggression and defensiveness. Although schooling in general is promoted as that strongest of all societal supports for the well-being of children, in the context of this discussion, it is difficult to avoid the claim that schooling institutions tend to operate in the interests of a society that weakens and indeed threatens the well-being of Indigenous children and their families and communities.

It is indisputable that the schooling that has been provided to Indigenous children has played a very significant role in the identity formation processes and in the consciousness of Indigenous peoples, both as individuals and as collectives. Within the Indigenous child as with any child, identity formation is a natural developmental process. For the Indigenous child, this developmental process should reasonably be expected to occur in an Indigenous world within a state of Indigenous consciousness. Whether contemporary schooling as it is practiced today supports or twists this process is an underlying question of this work.

Theory is composed of words, and it is this composition that enables one theory to incorporate another theory without any loss of integral consistency. In talking about

Indigenous children, the important factor to keep in mind is that the child is not words or theory and cannot be made to represent anything other than self. In a discourse on the education of Indigenous children, the topics that ensure an integrity and respect for Indigenous beings must centre on Indigenous descriptions and experiences related to ontology and epistemology, to consciousness and identity. What is visible and otherwise apparent to Indigenous and non-Indigenous "others" in the behavior and words of the Indigenous child in school cannot continue to be interpreted simplistically as coming from a universal perspective supported by some universal epistemology, ontology or consciousness. Such universal systems do not exist, but for educators to deny the existence of ontologies, epistemologies and models of consciousness other than those incorporated into the contents and processes of schooling is to deny the existence of other peoples and other societies.

For this reason, the discourse on education for the Indigenous child must take an ontological, epistemological and consciousness focus. In actually maintaining this perspective, the authority and authenticity of contributors to the discourse ensure an inextricable and personal connection between the contributor and the child. The Indigenous value that holds a speaker accountable for the impact of words spoken ensures that contributors take personal responsibility for what is said and for the impacts of what is said upon the lives of children. It may still be expedient, but certainly will not reflect personal or professional integrity, to simply speculate and put forward theories, explanations and solutions in response to the "failure" of Indigenous children in schools.

An ontological focus from an Indigenous perspective requires a commitment of personal being that is not only evidenced in the discourse as speech, writing and theorizing, but in the actual living out of relationships and commitment on which these activities are based. A focus in education on the "being" of a child carries with it a requirement to be responsible and accountable for the life experiences of that child. It becomes reasonable then to suppose that any responsible and ethical educator will know how to respond to Indigenous children who don't know how to live and give expression to an imposed and foreign epistemology, ontology, and consciousness and who can only sense that this imposition will mean the ultimate destruction and loss of their own.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### Methods and Strategies of Research Process

*Background*

Based on my personal experiences over half a century of lived Indigenous reality, and according to the thinking set forward in the first chapter, the conceptual constructs of identity formation and consciousness will underpin and serve as the foundation of my research focus. The methodology for this project is a combination of description and interpretation of Indigenous life-world phenomena as the primary data source. This involved recording the processes and contents of Indigenous experiences, changing life-world events, and the sequence and emergence of research patterns as well as the review of a literature I had determined to be pertinent to the topic. The data proper for the project then is derived from two sources: written texts of academic literature and knowledge shared and created through the oral traditions of Indigenous research participants, including myself as researcher/writer.

*Literature as Data*

I had not intended initially that the literature serve as data. However, in the review of the literature, I found that the only approach that was evolving as useful and intellectually credible was a system of analysis where I pulled portions of text from a wider, sometimes seemingly disconnected, context. These portions of "new meaning" had stood out from their context in ways that served as the trigger for my own deeper analyses, leading to deeper understanding of key concepts inherent to Indigenous reality as I knew it to be. The observation that I was not using the literature as a standard reference for my own thinking on Indigenous notions of identity and consciousness was originally noted by a colleague and supervisor, Dr. Stan Wilson.

It had already been apparent to me that the literature I was using and had found useful was not a literature that directly addressed Indigenous or non-Indigenous thought on identity formation or consciousness. Since I had been thinking on this research topic over a span of several decades, I have during that time reviewed extensively the existing literature addressing consciousness and identity formation from a Western and European

perspective. While this was my area of interest, I found that most of such literature had not been useful for the development of my own Indigenous perspectives on the topic.

What I had found as useful was a literature that crossed disciplines, whose content pointed to concepts and approaches that were useful to me in the elaboration and articulation of my thinking. My literature review was in fact a process for identification and collection of data. It was not a review of pertinent research and scholarship related to the topic. Dr. Wilson's observation had been accurate, and recognizing this led me to a re-appraisal of my use of the literature and to an eventual re-organization of my work.

Through the literature that I reviewed, other scholars, mostly non-Indigenous, had been indirectly providing me passage into a cognitive domain rich with resources that had rarely, if ever, been applied to Indigenous reality or interpreted from the context of Indigenous consciousness. I discovered the beauty and potential of mental constructs to be their capacity to precipitate images and fire imagination into the creation of new mental constructs and new ways of describing, interpreting and shaping, and ultimately experiencing the world, any world. Experiencing this creative force in my review of the literature propelled exceptionally rich, pertinent, and complex data into the forefront of my understanding.

### *Involvement of Research Participants*

This change in my perspective regarding the usage or referencing of relevant literature shifted also my understanding of how I had "located" the contributions of my research partners. These persons continued to share narratives and analyses with me, but I began to notice a new aspect to my own interpretations of these interactions. I realized that the content of these interactions was significant not only as new knowledge but also as a measure of validity for my own analyses of the inter-disciplinary collection of relevant academic texts. Relevancy of text had been measured by the degree of "fit" or resonance with my own personal knowledge and understanding of Indigenous reality.

As I had interacted with other Indigenous persons in a discourse around identity formation and consciousness, I had found the interactions to be an ongoing source of new information for everyone involved. They had enabled me to expand, enrich and transform my own knowledge through continuous layers (or cycles) of interactive

processes. These processes had involved interpretation, analysis, application and re-interpretation of new knowledge that was being created during the interactions themselves. Now, in addition to the collecting and creation of new knowledge, I recognized clearly that the content, the Indigenous oral data itself evolving from the interactive discourse, served as the validation criteria against which I tested my own knowledge, theories and analyses of the academic textual data that I had earlier selected.

The persons/participants who contributed their narratives and their analyses determined and shaped to some degree the research project. At the same time, they were themselves shaped and transformed to some degree by their involvement. For the duration and well-beyond their direct involvement in the research project itself, research participants explored and no doubt will continue to explore the meanings and relationships of Indigenous identity formation and consciousness through a focus on their own lived experiences.

The research project was originally designed to include specific descriptions of each participant's experiences within the project. I realized very quickly that this approach of documentation and analysis of participant transformation would itself very easily constitute a second major research project. This not being my research focus, I adopted an approach where participants interacted freely with me with the provision and understanding that if I used their words, their names would be included within the work unless they chose otherwise. This work then is my own interpretation and analysis based on personal lived experience, observations and interactions, written academic texts, and oral narratives and teachings from Indigenous researchers and research partners.

### *Selecting a Research Approach*

The research project depends upon a phenomenological approach, emphasizing the "meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations" (Bogdan & Biklen 1992, p.34). This approach recognized that persons interpret their experiences in multiple ways through an ongoing process of interactions with others. Further, it is these interactively-derived or co-created meanings of our lived experiences that constitute our reality. Bogdan/ Biklen claim that phenomenology defines reality in terms of social constructs. Whether or not this is "true" is irrelevant in this proposal; I refer to "lived

experience" as the social reality of consequence. In considering the array of approaches and theoretical orientations that might best support my research focus, I decided that there was no particular approach that would singularly enable or support the forms of analysis or the degree and types of interaction required for completing the research. Therefore, I selected an approach that combined elements of phenomenological description and hermeneutics, ethnography, and participatory action research in a way that "fit" with my own sense of appropriateness and respect in working with others, especially with other Indigenous persons and Indigenous reality.

The facilitated style of narratives-collection and meanings- creation incorporated dialogue and small group interactions set within a framework of respect and protocol appropriate to the particular Indigenous social context. The small gatherings of persons were informally structured, and rarely entirely focused on the research topic. Four audiotapes and two videotapes represented formal interactions with approximately twenty-five semi-structured ones. The participants in the conversations were aware that the topic under discussion was my research topic but that was not, to my observation and understanding, the reason that they entered into the dialogue so freely. It was because they themselves were interested in the topic and they wanted information and understanding from our discourse as much as I did. The content of these tapes was not included in this work for a number of reasons. The primary reason was that the direction that my own thinking and writing had taken did not readily permit incorporation of all of the data. The stories and information shared by the people who sat with me were far too significant to simply incorporate as relevant data incorporated in a few spots and the rest appended to the work. I decided that there had to be a different way to make most of that content available to others in a more appropriate time and manner. Some of the narratives and information shared did fit easily and well into the context provided by my discussion. Where this happened, descriptions and interpretations were both included within the text.

I have said that I used an approach in this project that combined elements from three standard social science methodologies: phenomenology and hermeneutics, ethnography and participatory action research. The following description and explanations is intended to show how particular elements of these methodologies were useful in this work.

Otherwise, the methodology displayed during this research arose as a natural outcome of interactions between Indigenous persons within the context of Indigenous communities and homes. I did not decide ahead of time what methodology I intended to use; I simply knew what approach I had to follow in order to be respectful and to find Indigenous persons who would be interested in working with me on a topic that they too were interested.

Determining the appropriate methodology for my particular piece of social science research required me to review what I knew about social science methodologies and then to *fit* one or more of these to my own approach, or to *fit* my approach into one or more of these. The important function of this process was to arrive at some sort of comprehensible description of *how* (by means of what methodology) I intended to carry out my research. This section details some of my thinking in that effort to combine several methodologies and approaches that are often perceived as typical of Western social science research but not necessarily effective as Indigenous approaches to research. The possible question of whether or not they are effective approaches to Indigenous research is irrelevant. In my work, elements of these typical Western approaches to research were combined into one simply because no one of them on its own could quite fit the needs as I had delineated them for my research project.

### *The Phenomenological Aspect in Indigenous Research Methodology*

"Lived experiences gather hermeneutic significance as we (reflectively) gather them by giving memory to them. Through meditations, conversations, day dreams, inspirations and other interpretive acts we assign meaning to the phenomena of lived life" (van Manen 1997, p.37). Hermeneutic phenomenology or interpretive phenomenology or interpretive acts through which we decipher or interpret meaning from our lived lives is an ordinary and constant daily activity. Sometimes, however, in economic circumstances where we are so busy trying to survive, we have to wait a fairly long time for the opportunity to "assign meaning" to our own experiences. Often the meaning that accompanies or is assigned to an experience or a memory of an experience is a meaning that has been learned.

I use the word "learned" in the sense that many people, including many Cree and Metis people, have been ''trained to know' those meanings that are considered to be appropriate by most members of "society". These then indirectly become the meanings that we 'know' we can give expression to through our words and actions if we want to be understood and accepted by members of 'society'. The words and concepts become easy for us to use because their meanings draw a response from the society that has defined and shaped them. The need for a positive human response to what we say and do is a human need. Society then, by its response or acceptance of me, has a tremendous impact on how I choose to give expression to my being or how I live my life.

Assigning meaning as used by van Manen (1997) implies by definition an action with intent that in turn implies a certain degree of autonomous power and control over personal decisions. Indigenous persons in general may consider that type of freedom, right, and power to be theirs by virtue of being human in the same manner that the theory postulates such freedom to engage in certain "lived experiences" must belong to every person. However, in the real world where lived experiences take place, the right to "give meaning" to these experiences is often not claimed or practiced openly by Indigenous persons, depending on the social context or environment of the experience/event. Thus, the sharing of meanings with others in order to create new meanings does not necessarily flow directly from interpretations of "lived experiences", but often flows from adopted, "learned" and therefore, appropriate interpretations of "lived experiences". This could be imaged as adding an internal layer of hermeneutic discourse within which the Indigenous person must engage prior to participating in a process of creation of new meanings.

Within the context of my research methodology, the *self-critical* and *intersubjective* (van Manen 1997, p.11) aspects of interpretive phenomenology or the phenomenological approach provided exactly that opportunity to Indigenous partners involved in the research to "give meaning" to their particular lived experiences. These "lived experiences" included both those in which they are immediately involved and those which sprang from memories during our interactions. The phenomenological approach is described as one that ensures that the research process itself is not viewed as distinct from the results of the total experience. "Phenomenological research is a poetizing activity"

and it is impossible to "summarize a poem in order to present the result" because to do so would destroy the poem itself which "is the result" (van Manen 1997, p.13).

van Manen is describing phenomenological research as an activity that brings the reality of a particular world into being. This is reminiscent of the ways in which we describe how ceremonies and rituals (including words and music and every other part) can bring another reality or "presence" into being. However, he describes phenomenological research as a focus more on using language and voice as "primal incantation" that can link our personal beings to original experiences through invoked memories (van Manen 1997, p.13). This is useful where words are used to create spaces for speakers who need to go back in time in order to make meaning of their lives in the present. Such spaces are opportunities to re-live past experiences through the power of the word to transcend time and shape or re-shape the world at any moment in history. This power of the word to invoke being and to shape the world is highly significant in this research project.

In phenomenological research, the *word* is significant because it carries the descriptions and the interpretations of lived experiences and/or existential meanings. Phenomenology by virtue of its inherent focus on the many forms of meaning structures for human lived experiences recognizes the responsibility that inheres in the composition of text that attempts to articulate these varied structures and meanings. Expanding this specifically in relation to this project is to say that the words and text portray a long process of engagement and research. I engaged in a dialogue with other Indigenous persons to share the narratives of our lived experiences and to attempt to explicate the relationships and meanings that lie within and between such experiences and such descriptions.

This work contains descriptions and interpretations of lived experiences as well as descriptions and interpretations of interpretations. Talking with individuals and with small groups yielded a large corpus of what might be referred to as data. This data, aside from standing on its own as new knowledge, served as both a descriptive detailing and a foundation for further description, interpretation, and analysis within the project. Descriptions are crucial to this work because it is impossible to rely totally on interpretations to convey meaning accurately, especially when attempting to dialogue across the chasm of two different ways of being and thinking.

Van Manen addressed the question of whether or not a description is itself an interpretation. He holds the position that "phenomenological text is descriptive in that it names something" and thereby simultaneously permits that something to be seen, and that it is also interpretive in that it "mediates between interpreted meanings and the thing toward which the interpretations point' (van Manen 1997, p.26). van Manen doesn't develop his description of phenomenological research to address the case of dialogue across language and meaning systems that evolve from differing ways of being and thinking. In order to address this somewhat, I have used the term *phenomenology* to mean descriptions of lived experience and *hermeneutic* to mean interpretations (textual or otherwise symbolic) of those lived experiences as well as second order interpretations related to those interpretations. In this work, these second order interpretations are those, for example, that evolve from references to Indigenous language terms and meanings. Except in two instances (the discussions around the *wikohtowin* and the *manitoukan*) I have avoided discussions relying on Cree language terms in the context of this English language presentation. I have done this, not because Cree wouldn't be more appropriate to discuss such concepts and ideas but since Cree is not my first language, I cannot write in Cree and most readers probably will not read in Cree.

### *Ethnographical Aspects in Indigenous Research Methodology*

The definition of ethnography suggested a second research approach that might appropriately be applied to this project. Ethnography is generally defined as "the art and science of describing a group or a culture" (Fetterman 1989, p.11). The focus of ethnography is the everyday experiences of human beings; most ethnographers bound their discussions within theoretical parameters that permit them to focus their observations and descriptions of a group or a culture. The process begins generally with observations and interactions to gather information into a concrete form, e.g. notes and tapes. This information is then committed to written text along with a process of interpretation and analysis. Because the researcher engages in the work through a dialectical relationship with other persons, the sources and content of data are endless and, to a large degree, unpredictable.

In this work, I have described the Northern Alberta Cree/Metis way of life and historical experiences of that life as these pertain to a discourse on identity formation and consciousness within that lifeworld. The one characteristic of ethnography that became obvious through my own research process was that the sources and content of data seemed endless and unpredictable. To take a topic to the people who invited me to come and to in turn invite them to become engaged in a process of interpretive phenomenology was only the first step. From here on, where the process went and what the determinants were in terms of physical contexts and lived experiences was open, fluid, and flexible.

Descriptions of the group experiences were not, in fact, ethnography, partially, I would guess, because there was no defined group. However, to use the language of ethnography as an aid to articulation, the descriptions were a combination of the 'emic' as the insider's perspective of reality and the 'etic' as an external social science perspective. The difference in this work stems from the fact that standard ethnography anticipates the emic perspective to be coming from the one being "studied" and the etic perspective to be coming from the one doing the "studying". In this research project, I discovered that the emic perspective and the etic perspective came from every participant in every interaction. As the person assuming ultimate responsibility for the outcomes of the research project itself, I also shared both perspectives myself at every interaction. To me, this approach and this experience challenged the underlying assumptions that surround the notions of emic and etic perspectives as if these represent two necessary and dialectical parts in the description of one reality or one set of lived experiences. In fact, in this model of the ethnographic approach couched in the language of etic and emic, it is the voices of the emic perspective that describe the lifeworld of experiences and it is the etic perspective (usually those same voices) that interprets and assigns meaning to those experiences. The notion of etic and emic perspectives as separate and dichotomized personal perspectives on lived experiences or realities seems hardly sustainable for sound ethnography, at least in relation to research involving Indigenous peoples and societies.

In my work, the emic perspective was treated as the descriptions of lived experiences – in phenomenological terms, these were the first-order original experiences that are pre-reflective, without categorization, abstraction, or reflection, as much as this is possible. The etic perspective was the second-order interpretive expression of the lived experience.

This etic perspective in ethnography is usually reserved for the analytical commentary of the 'non-insider' researcher who has been studying, interacting with, or interviewing cultures or groups who are not viewed as participants in a discourse that frames the "external social science perspective". In this project, the etic commentary evolved from the participants' analyses of their lived experiences to determine the structures and themes of those experiences and to give expression to them.

I wanted to produce a text which retained the meaning of Indigenous lived experiences and conversations, elucidating them in ways which described, enhanced, expanded, pragmatized, deepened and embodied the relationship between identity formation and consciousness within specific Indigenous research participants. Like poetry, the work of the research was to be whole and complete unto itself, the result of a "poetizing activity"(van Manen 1997, p.13) where principles of phenomenological research was brought together with parts of ethnographical research along with the "participant" focus of participatory action research (PAR). This research approach that combined elements from three standard research methodologies permitted research participant to take an active and autonomous role in the various and dynamical structures of interpretation and description related to the particular lived experience under consideration. Essentially, this multi-dimensional approach to the development of the research text was built upon people interacting with each other and with their environment and then participating in conversations which gave words and thereby assigned meanings to those interactions and those experiences.

In the research process, there was a sense that if we were to follow the patterns, we would find that the ascriptions of those interactions and experiences would reveal the fractal-like properties of scale-invariance and self-similarity. The fractals of meaning would show up as smaller patterns combining to form similar but larger patterns, which would then re-combine into even larger replicas, continuing the re-patterning process into time and space beyond the comprehension of our ordinary consciousness. It was only in this manner that I could imagine the shape of a process and/or the structures that demonstrated how it is that we make meanings from our experiences simultaneously as we create our personal and social worlds through our experiences. In this way of looking at how the world is "made", we do not focus so much on the layers, but on the patterns of

meanings and experiences. Further, it is not only a case of the patterns repeating themselves but rather, through the nature of the process itself, the patterns remain the same and, paradoxically, become something new, and something more complex to us as both observers and parts of the pattern.

If we were to discuss this process in terms of our own experiences of consciousness, our statements might go as follows:

> We would be conscious of our involvement and participation within the first pattern of meanings and experiences;
>
> we would have to work harder to become conscious of our involvement and participation in the second pattern of meanings and experiences;
>
> we would have to really push ourselves to be conscious of our involvement and participation in the third pattern of meanings;
>
> by the fourth pattern, we are stretched to bring forward and hold a consciousness of ourselves as individual and participating beings.

At this point, there is a likelihood that a shift from an ordinary state of consciousness would be required in order to interpret what is already an interpretation, an experience of the abstract in the abstract, no embodiment, only our minds holding precariously to our place within the pattern.

Simultaneously as we know ourselves to be within this pattern, we are aware that we do not recognize this space, neither as a part of the world of our cognition or imagination nor as some part of the phenomenal world "outside" of ourselves. We understand that we must create meanings solely from the experience of ourselves being within the pattern.

This awareness is enmeshed with the unfolding realization that we cannot experience and make meanings unless there is some way of recognizing that which, at this particular moment, is available as the 'stuff' of creation. We need some point of familiarity in terms of how to assist ourselves, to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps from this mired state. In finally giving up our tenacious hold because there is no obvious reason to keep it, and having no understanding of what, if anything, is happening, we permit ourselves to be moved by the experience and we find ourselves being folded over and back somehow into the original pattern.

This time, however, although there is a sense of familiarity with the original experiences and meanings, we realize that we have shifted, or more accurately, that we have been shifted, from our original positions in relation to the experiences and meanings. This realization that we have been so transformed has the effect of catapulting us into a different level of experience and meaning, albeit within the same original pattern.

This is to suggest that every time we arrive at this fourth order of the original pattern, we as the active agents will have an opportunity to make choices. At this point, we can choose to stay with the original contents of the original pattern but to delve into deeper and more complex meanings and experiences. Or we can change the original contents by inviting in different factors, staying at the same level but painting the original pattern with new colours. What we have to accept is that we will never be able to go back to the original experience, to the original pattern, at least not in the way that we experienced and interpreted it. Lived experiences do not permit us as conscious beings to stop the flow of our own experiences of consciousness. Consciousness as lived experience cannot stop its own flow when the vitality of the flow rests in the energy of ourselves as conscious beings.

Participation in this multi-dimensional approach to the research demands a certain level and type of personal commitment to undergo the process. There is an extremely high likelihood that it demands certain prior experiences and knowledge but to determine this would require a different research project. Even if one or more of the participants who had agreed to work with me had decided to withdraw their involvement, that would not have changed the commitment required of any one of them during the time that they were involved, nor would I have anticipated such a withdrawal to have an unduly significant effect on the outcome of the project. The critical factor was the quality or type of commitment and input during the active participation, not the length of time involved.

To conclude this summary description of the four patterns, let me try saying all of the preceding in another way. The first pattern is the sharing of experiences through memories. The second pattern is an interpretive and intersubjective development of meanings about those shared experiences - we create new meanings from an analysis of the shared narratives. In the third pattern, the expanded group moves through an

analytical process that considers the meanings that arose from the second pattern. We look at how those meanings came to be, considering their combined shape as well noting the new meanings and distinct shapes that spring into being in the text. The fourth pattern demands that we move out from ourselves, we become analysts and reach back to bring ourselves forward as the original owners of specific life-experiences and memories.

We sit within the pattern with nothing to interpret, analyse or understand. We have become conscious of ourselves as the symbolic thread winding its way from one pattern to the next, the element that holds the fractal together and maintains its state of consciousness.

At this point, if we can interpret this particular text of ourselves within the pattern, we create new meanings of ourselves and we experience ourselves as transformed by the whole process of participation and immersion within the patterns of meanings and experiences. The fractal nature of the patterning of meanings and experiences does not halt at this point. We could conceivably continue to work together and experience how the patterning continues with or without our input, direction, or influence. Or we can go our separate ways, and continue to remain conscious and observing of how the patterns continue to be reflected through the lives of individuals and communities.

### *Aspects of Participatory Action Research in Project Research Methodology*

It is fairly clear that the theoretical elements of participatory action research would fit into the foregoing framework for my research methodology. The experiences of PAR are underlain and enriched by (1) "the ontological possibility" of real popular knowledge (science), (2) the "existential possibility of transforming the researcher/researched relationship", and (3) the need for "autonomy and identity" in the exercise of peoples' "power" (Fals-Borda, 1991). In this work, the focus on the lived experiences of the participants presupposes the legitimacy and validity of personal knowledge. In other words, what Fals-Borda refers to as "popular knowledge" or the "science" of the people is what constitutes the base or heart of my research. The existence of Indigenous knowledge systems is an obvious fact to Indigenous people. It is not because I am buying into the "ontological possibility" of "popular knowledge" that I am choosing to recognize those elements of PAR. It is because I respect the overall approach which

vests the power of knowledge creation within the people themselves and at the same time recognizes and addresses explicitly the political nature of the challenges inherent to research conducted in this manner.

Relationship is the critical factor in the development and establishment of respectful Indigenous research projects. There is always a relationship between researcher and area of research, but when the research topic is embedded within human beings, then methodologies or strategies must be designed within the cultural parameters and definitions of respectful relationships. Otherwise, the researcher treads the dangerous ground of attempting to mine resources that are held within an individual person. In focusing on the treasure as the goal of the research, a researcher may forget the significance of relationship with that person who bears a sacred trust for that treasure. Standard academic research paradigms tend not to recognize or incorporate into their models the complexity and depth of knowledge that is required in order for researchers to develop successful research projects with Indigenous peoples. This knowledge often flows from the principle that Indigenous forms of research involve the establishment of particular and relevant forms of interrelationships amongst all living things connected with the research itself.

Transformation is another significant principle that I described in an early paper (Weber-Pillwax, 1996) as an anticipatory characteristic of Indigenous research[6]. In that paper, I pointed out that a research process would transform every research participant, even those persons perceived to be only indirectly involved or not involved at all but who live in the community touched by the project. The fact that PAR factors in an anticipated transformation as a desirable outcome of a research project is compatible with my thinking on the goals of Indigenous research methodology.[7]

---

[6] "Anticipatory" characteristic in the sense that any person involved in the research project will be transformed as a result of that involvement. In a sequence of time and events therefore, any participant can anticipate the transformation.

[7] An argument that transformation is an outcome of any research project and that transformation can as easily be a tool used by the colonizer. This is certainly not disputable. My description of transformation is to be interpreted within the contexts of PAR and Indigenous research communities. In those contexts, transformation happens according to the direct involvement of Indigenous research participants and not according

In PAR, research participants inform and teach each other about the different worlds of knowledge that each has within his/her capacity and competence. It is a relationship that is intended to create and enhance opportunities for personal and mutual empowerment through the recognition, acquisition, and/or creation of personal and shared knowledge systems. The persons involved in this particular project recognized, acquired, and created new forms of personal and shared knowledge – knowledge that was multi-directional and multi-layered, taking unpredictable forms. These particular forms of empowerment were not necessarily recognizable and evident in the exterior aspects and behaviours of the person. They were displayed more as elements within the contents and processes inherent to relationships themselves.

While empowerment and transformation were not explicitly intended as outcomes of this research project, I was always aware that the methodology would logically result in personal transformations of varying degrees and types, including transformation in how we understand personal empowerment within an Indigenous context. Transformations within participants occurred as a result of the intense and deeply personal nature of the process. The opportunity to come together in research for the co-creation of knowledge based on the attainment of mutual and shared understanding of lived experiences, both historical and present was unusual and exciting for Indigenous participants.

Based upon my own personal experiences and preliminary conversations related to the research process I intended to follow, I had anticipated that transformation and personal empowerment would also be an outcome of the gradual discernment and unwrapping of existing Indigenous knowledge structures governing relationships with the ancestors and the spirit world. A personal sense of empowerment and personal transformation which might arise from new experiences of relationships with the past would certainly help Indigenous young people, in particular, to recognize the meaningful and sacred presence

---

to an "outside" researcher's agenda. The argument can theoretically be pushed further to say that the colonized Indigenous persons will use any tools as they have been taught by the colonizer, and this includes research for more effective colonization. To that I can only respond that clearly a knife in the hand of an enemy is not perceived the same as the knife in the hand of a friend. Or to put it a better way, even from one quarry, the stones that build a prison are not the same stones that build a cathedral. It is up to us as Indigenous researchers to know the difference and build accordingly.

and participation of their ancestors in the development of Indigenous personal knowledge and its related processes of identity formation and consciousness development.

This explicit recognition of the meanings brought into our lives from the spirit world must be shown to encompass more than long and resonant narratives and poetry, which we relate to each other and to others as memorization and polemics for didactic purposes. Whenever the words we choose to use are accepted and validated by the experiences of the people, whether of past or present, and whether in ceremony or ordinary space and time, they become expressions of the autonomous and distinct nature of individual and collective identities. When the spirits give knowledge to an individual, it is not intended that that person be revered as someone above or more worthy of honour than another person. The gift of knowledge is intended for the enrichment or betterment of all the people, and indeed of all life, and it is given to enable more compassion and peace amongst all peoples.

PAR stresses the importance of autonomy and identity as indicators of the people's power. In PAR, the autonomy and identity of the people are the measures of the people's power - a high degree of autonomy and a strong sense of "people" identity indicates a lot of power by the people, presumably over their own lives.

From a slightly different turn, this Indigenous research project holds that lived experiences, whether viewed from an individual perspective or a collective perspective, are the expressions of identity and autonomy. Lived experiences are inextricably linked with autonomy and identity. They are inter-related and connected in such a way that each affects and to some extent determines the shape of the other. Lived experiences shape identity and give reality to autonomy. Identity shapes lived experiences and embodies autonomy. Autonomy gives meaning to identity and can determine the shape of lived experiences. It is understandable then, that Indigenous people tend to see all lived experiences as sacred since the human being is a sacred being, and it is impossible to isolate identity from lived experiences.

To conclude this section on PAR and how some of its elements were applied in this particular project, I want to refer once more to the importance that PAR ascribes to empowerment of the research participants. In this work, the notion of individual personal

empowerment is an implied necessary characteristic. Without an individual sense of identity and autonomy, of personal empowerment, contributions to the research project would be minimal. An individual research participant cannot experience and interpret the meanings of identity and lived experiences in a state of partial confinement or restriction to "culturally other" definitions of time and space and history. In other words, the individual's sense of empowerment must flow from knowledge systems and notions of consciousness that have evolved to enable us to create new meanings and new experiences relevant to our beings as Indigenous persons. Our lived experiences must be given expression in an explicit way if we are to understand and maintain autonomy over our own lived experiences. These expressions become our new histories as individuals and as a people. They become the stuff of our narratives of hope for our children and their futures. The intersubjective nature of the research process that we have experienced reflects the capacity to inspire participants to reach into the past and bring forth the life-energy of ancient times, spaces, and beings. That life-energy that has always sustained and that continues to sustain Indigenous identities and Indigenous experiences of consciousness beyond the limitations and restrictions of imposed knowledge systems.

### *Principles of Indigenous Research Methodology*

The methodology for this research arose in response to the need for me as researcher to be consistent with what I understand and recognize to be the principles that underlay Indigenous research. These principles which have been outlined in an earlier paper (Weber-Pillwax, 1999) are not constraining or limiting (nor are they necessarily inapplicable to a comparative "non-Indigenous" research, either singly or as a group), neither do they serve as indicators of what constitutes Indigenous research. They are instead those principles identified as significant guides in the planning and implementation of research projects that involve Indigenous participants. Naturally, there is no intent here to suggest that the principles which I have identified and to which I, therefore, will adhere are to be construed as some form of or claim to "truth", Indigenous or otherwise.

These principles have come from the learnings that I have received from the many teachers who have blessed me with their presence in my life. I know that nothing of what

I say is solely derived of my mind, yet I also know that I must accept responsibility for all that I say. I cannot legitimately, logically, and comfortably claim to be using or proposing "Indigenous research methodology". I will claim, however, that within the limits of my own discernment and other capacities, the methodology that I am proposing will adhere to and reflect those principles that are intended to support the integrity of all research participants within the reality of Indigenous lived experiences in this particular context. Being an Indigenous person involved in formal research perhaps allows me to suggest that this work is my contribution to the concept of an Indigenous research methodology.

In summary, those principles which I have identified as foundational to Indigenous research are as follows:

> All forms of living things are to be respected as being related and interconnected. "The measure of the land and the measure of our bodies are the same" said Chief Joseph (T.C. McLuhan, 1971, p.54). Respect means living that relationship in all forms of interactions.
>
> The source of a research project is the heart/mind of the researcher, and "checking your heart" is a critical element in the research process. The researcher ensures that there are no negative or selfish motives for doing the research, because that could bring suffering upon everyone in the community. A 'good heart' guarantees a good motive, and good motives guarantee benefits to everyone involved.
>
> The foundation of Indigenous research lies within the reality of the lived Indigenous experience. Indigenous researchers ground their research knowingly in the lives of real persons as individual and social beings, not on the world of ideas.
>
> Any theories developed or proposed are based upon and supported by Indigenous forms of epistemology. We as Indigenous scholars who wish to participate in the creation of knowledge within our own ways of being must begin with an active and scholarly recognition of who our philosophers and prophets are in our own communities. These are still the keepers and teachers of our epistemologies.
>
> Indigenous research cannot undermine the integrity of Indigenous persons or communities because it is grounded in that integrity. Clearly this is both a test and a statement of definition for Indigenous research and is made simply as a response to the argument that Indigenous research poses the same threats to the Indigenous community as does non-Indigenous research.

> The languages and cultures of Indigenous peoples are living processes. Research and creation of knowledge are continuous functions for the thinkers and scholars of every Indigenous group, and it is through the [redacted] of this principle that Indigenous university scholarship is conducted. [redacted] scholarship reflects inherited Indigenous ontologies and epistem[redacted] and it is the responsibility of Indigenous researchers associated with a university to maintain and continuously renew the connections with our ancestors and our communities through embodiment, adherence, and practice of these.

I have not elaborated on how these principles were incorporated or reflected in this particular piece of research simply because a theoretical discussion of Indigenous research methodology is beyond the scope that I have defined for this work.

There were places during the research process, however, where the principles themselves gave life, energy and direction. For this research, I had envisioned a spiraling process where, simultaneously, the principles contained the journey's goal, shaped the journey's path, and guided the journey's traveler. The principles were the only blazes along the trail to guide my personal process as an Indigenous person immersed with other participants in the discovering-mode of a research process that sought to embody those principles. The principles turned and re-turned unto themselves, carrying us as the research participants from one arc of the spiral to the next. We shifted and were transformed through the co-creation of meanings and knowledge, but always we existed and moved within the principles. To use the metaphor of one wise teacher, Dr. S. Wilson, it was our beings seeking knowledge as the eagle seeks life: rising spiral-fashion, circling higher and higher to "see" more and more.

The methodology was one that was constantly changing and evolving, its pieces holding together and maintaining direction on a pre-selected path by a set of principles. The interactions of the research participants, both amongst themselves and with elements of their environments, all sustained and, at the same time, contained and maintained the balance that inhered within the seemingly unpredictable nature of the process. The goal of a research process of this fluid nature must lie within the willingness of the participants to trust the process that they themselves co-create and then move in. They thus become the force/energy of balance that ensures that the research process remains connected with lived experiences and with those meanings derived from such lived experiences.

## Description of the Research Process

The research process unfolded according to a very simple and straightforward plan of action. There was minimal planning initially because each step of the journey led naturally into the next step, as each phase led into the next. The same fluid process depicted the nature of the interactions amongst research participants. These interactions with research partners are still ongoing, with none of us expecting our various relationships to dissolve or stop, knowing that the shape of our future connections depends entirely on our decisions and actions of today.

Each step of the research process is described with brief explanations and pertinent information as to how the project actually unfolded.

1. I prepared the contexts (space, time, protocol) for informally structured interviews in five different locations on Northern Alberta. I was aware that for most of these interviews, I needed to be prepared for small groups sessions of interested people who would attend the interview and offer their own views on the matter at hand. On those occasions, I prepared the context for a follow-up session. In some of the cases, the second session led to a third session. The individuals who welcomed a discussion of the research topic in the first place remain open to continuing participation in further research. The relationships continue to develop, and the research topic expands and takes on more meaning as the network broadens.

2. The initial informally structured interviews were recorded with audio and some videotaping. The information from those sessions is held in concrete, static format, and as such this permits me to include particular segments of that research content directly into any text. In most of this work, however, it is my own words describing the meanings that were created and shared within the various interactions. The other research participants recognized that I was the writer for this process and as such accepted that word choices were mine. I chose how to write the descriptions of our shared lived experiences and how to present our interpretations in a way that didn't claim that I arrived at those interpretations by myself.

3. It was and remains my intention that all Cree recordings be transcribed into spoken and written English, and that all English recordings be translated into Cree, and then transcribed into English language text. This is a significant process if this information is to be used by another scholar, especially one who either doesn't speak Cree or doesn't speak English. In this project, translating and transcribing would have revealed a wealth of information in relation to the Cree language and the meanings carried there – meanings not necessarily coming across in translations. This, however, must be a follow-up research agenda.

4. During this research process, I found that what I needed to do first was to break up my research topic into manageable chunks. I saw that I needed to build a foundation that would enable me to structure these chunks into a larger or longer research agenda. I wanted to know whether or not other Indigenous people would find my topic worthwhile and relevant as a discourse topic in their lifeworlds, and whether or not, they would be willing to work with me on that discourse.

5. I needed further to find a way to locate that discourse – something on which to hinge thoughts and narratives from both past and present events. I needed a way, a structure that would permit us to speak about those aspects that were not visible in our shared lifeworld but that were necessary and dynamic forces in our lives. I could see that the research process that I had engaged in with other Indigenous researchers had been essentially a beginning.

The work had been to identify and address the first layer of a number of connected pieces. That realization presented the option to select one piece and complete an in-depth research project on that one piece rather than continue with the large brush approach that I had started. I was reluctant to take the direction of concentrating the research focus on one piece. I felt that I had selected a topic whose inherent meaning would be lost if the research approach dissected it into seemingly disconnected pieces, even if the distinctions themselves were clearly being made in the interests of sound research.

Identity formation and consciousness development of the individual person were inextricably connected, a whole made up of many pieces. It helped me to image my research topic as a sphere where this particular piece of work was to look at the first layer

of the whole. The pieces that had been identified during the research process as having impact on identity and consciousness would all be included in this first project. The work would then serve as the foundation for studying in more depth those same pieces as they reappeared in the ensuing layers of the sphere. My long-term research agenda seemed to be taking shape. For this project, I had decided that my focus would be the first layer. There were from this point four further steps in the process.

6. I completed a detailed literature review that culminated in the formulation of linkages amongst the literature, descriptions of lived experiences, interpretations of those descriptions of lived experiences, and interpretations of those interpretations. This has already been discussed in a previous section of this chapter.

7. Interpretation, self-reflection and analysis has been on-going through all stages of the process. The attention of the participants was directed to hermeneutics related to the life-worlds that had been described and shared, life-worlds of the present and life-worlds re-collected from memories and formed into new narratives. At times, in order to take a specific focus in our interactions with each other, I introduced relevant texts. Sessions involving texts encouraged us to interact with the text, a new and different process and activity for those persons immersed in orality consciousness.

8. I had anticipated that the articulation of Indigenous knowledge through the sharing of life-world experiences and teachings would suggest possible theories and/or models to represent Indigenous structures of identity formation and consciousness. Further, I had intended that the formulation of these models and/or theories as they evolved from Indigenous discourse would be completed during this project. What I have been able to actually do in this work is to create some shadows of shapes that may come later.

9. We have been involved in a spiral reaching for higher states of vision and understanding. It is easy for us to envision the eagle's spiral for a greater breadth of vision and more specific focus. However, it is not so easy for us to realize the degree of commitment necessary for that experience of personal intersubjectivity

that crosses and re-crosses those invisible boundaries established by discourse. Discourse – the separation and joining by turn of the creative powers of the word and the event in the experiences and interpretations of the life-world.

## CHAPTER FOUR: WEAVING CONNECTIONS TO A LITERATURE

There are essentially three categories that I have used to frame this part of the discussion:

> Parts of a literature that speaks to consciousness and consciousness theories,
>
> Parts of a literature that speaks to particular and critical psycho-social dimensions of identity formation and consciousness that are specifically relevant to my work, e.g. memories and history
>
> Parts of a literature that is based on ethnographic work and is specific to the Northern Indigenous peoples of the politically defined four western provinces and those peoples who are their neighbours across the borders into Yukon and the North West Territories.

In this section, I will discuss the literature in its relationship to Indigenous notions of identity formation and consciousness. Much of the literature speaks to the general nature of the identity formation and consciousness, without specific references to Indigenous experiences and thought. However, I found such works to be useful in that it led me to possible underlying explanations for the survival of Indigenous peoples seemingly locked in a hostile environment. As I explained in an earlier chapter, I have expanded the present discussion to move beyond the standard expectations of a literature review. I have begun to weave the research "data" in with the threads offered by the literature that I selected as particularly relevant for the development and presentation of this work.

### Category 1: Theories of Consciousness

Theories of consciousness range in their focus from the pure physicality of the brain to the insubstantiality of mysticism and ultimate ineffability. Cohen and Rapport (1995) presented a scale of sample studies on consciousness written between 1988 and 1994. Those works and the authors cited in those works described paradigms of consciousness which include consciousness as biological processes and neuronal activity in the brain (Crick,1994), as biological computer (Moravec, 1988 and Blakemore, 1988), as individual narratives (Dennett, 1991), as a mind-body problem (Eccles, 1994) as an ongoing process of natural selection within an ecological habitat (Edelman, 1992). Cohen and Rapport expand on Edelman's notion of ecological habitat as that in which the brain lives and develops according to its capacity for selectivity in utilizing experiences. The brain is seen as constructing the world, and "informing its construction with value".

This view presents individuals as "conscious originators of their behaviour" (Cohen and Rapport, 1995, p.6). As Bateson (1972)) suggests, we make connections between the external world and ourselves through the actions of our minds; these connections are internally generated and we "may be seen as active participants in our own universe" (Cohen and Rapport, 1995).

This collection of essays is divided into three sections: (a) evidence of consciousness, (b) the relationship between individual and collective consciousness, and (c) altered or 'alternative' states of consciousness. All of the essays are written from the perspective of the anthropologist, and as different from the perspectives of the mathematician or physicist (Anderson and Mandell in MacCormac & Stamenov, 1996), or the brain scientist (Hobson, 1994). These anthropological perspectives represented an easier entrance point for me in beginning to organize my own thinking about consciousness and its relationship to identity formation within an Indigenous context.

Anthropologists have tended to use ethnography to write about the consciousnesses of "others" even though they may not have explicitly claimed to be "looking" at or "listening" to consciousness. They collect narratives, choosing one over another as they "do" their fieldwork. Then they create and write narratives, assuming that they recognize the actions of their own consciousnesses in the selection and interpretation of the particular narratives they have chosen to collect, and/or give attention to. In many cases, these researchers never know, or they discover years later, that what they wrote as narratives describing or representative of "others", were, in fact, based on misunderstanding and erroneous interpretations of what they were "seeing" and "hearing". There are hundreds of examples of such instances, most of them probably being talked about in two different communities of circulation: that of the anthropologist and that of the anthropologized. It is probably unfortunate for both that the stories being told in one community rarely find their way across the borders into the other territory.

What is being said about anthropologists is of course true for any of us: we assume that we know the actions of our own consciousness in the selection and interpretation of the narratives we choose to recognize and pay attention. Anthropologists however go one step further and write out their interpretations for the world to read and discuss at will.

This commentary on anthropologists is not to suggest that "good" – moral and skilled - anthropologists do not exist, or that anthropological research is not useful and indeed necessary. It is included in this work because so much of what has shaped our understanding of ourselves as Indigenous peoples has come down to us from the social scientists, and from anthropology in particular. If we didn't read, we were still impacted because anthropologists were not hesitant to come to our 'places', and other people did read and believe what was written about us. As every field of scholarship and research, there are ethical persons and unethical persons, there are those who respect and those who do not respect. Then there are those few who know that the first thing to be clear on is whose definition is to be used in making decisions and choices around ethics and respect. I am writing from this context of appreciation for the good that has come from the anthropologist who respects and critical awareness and anger for the negative that has come from the anthropologist who doesn't respect.

Individual experience of identity formation can be influenced by anthropological actions. I will share an example; the focus of this story is not the anthropologist, the focus is on the effects of the anthropologist's actions. An anthropologist interviewed my grandfather for 'information'. His narrative was printed and discussed in anthropological scholarly circles; his Cree words were translated and the meanings dissected. All of this work was intended to expand somebody's knowledge in a useful manner and to some useful ends, we must assume. In reality, when I came across the article unexpectedly, the assumption did not hold. I was shocked and totally disbelieving that people actually related to other people, strangers, in the manner suggested by that article. I was a second year university student and this was totally incomprehensible to me. The old man's person was described, his home was described, his wife, his sons. This was such a respected man that some individuals avoided looking at him, yet here he was being caricatured. The Cree words told us that he had asked the anthropologist not to spread his words around, which I interpreted as the publishing itself.

When I took the book home and "read" the Cree words to my mother, she was silent for a time, and I felt something go through the air. It was a starkness, like the feeling that comes when silent black clouds are thrown across the summer evening sky after a boiling sun has scorched the brains all day. Standing silent in her kitchen, watching, waiting for

the moment when the flashes of lightning finally catch up to the race, and the thunder wracks the stillness, tearing asunder the paralysis of our beings. We must run for shelter.

After I read the article to my mother, I felt a sense of shame for all of us: for my grandfather that his life and his words had been splashed across the anthropologist's page like a specimen under a microscope, for my mother, silent in pain under the disrespect; for myself because I had brought the action home into my mother's house, hurting her and in a way contributing to the dishonoring of my grandfather. It was I who gave this explicit and concrete recognition to the dishonouring of my grandfather's words and, consequently, to his being and to all of his family, and now it was I who had to accept responsibility for any follow-up action. I accepted the responsibility then, but I have done nothing yet to bring balance to these actions. There were many reasons to explain my inaction at that time, and to explain the delay, however, there are none that remove that responsibility to respond.

I have shared this experience through a description of my own remembered feelings and thoughts about a particular and significant moment in time. I have also described the situation that precipitated this significance into my life. There is no need to talk in detail about the anthropologist and the exact nature of the anthropological enquiry. Note the beauty and pristine objectivity suggested by those words: anthropological enquiry. They seem to exonerate and remove the anthropologist from any connection with the pain and the shame that the work brought into my world as an Indigenous young person. Because of the relationships amongst my mother, my grandfather and me, the research that had been conducted and the descriptions and interpretations that ensued were traumatic influences in the shaping of my identity. There is no separation between a person's emotions and thinking and his/her identity formation process. There was no doubt that that anthropologist had a significant part in my identity formation.

I don't think that this notion of a connection between lived experiences and identity is foreign or strange to anyone, but perhaps the idea that words have impact as experiences needs more emphasis or clarification. The next section deals with the impact that certain words and certain ways of using words has had on Indigenous identity formation processes in Canada. Certainly words have contributed heavily to the significant

experiences of identity formation for Indigenous persons, and this goes a long way back into history. The use of particular words to name peoples and thereby define relationship structures with those people goes back into the time of invasions by European colonial powers when the English and the French saw and described a rich but untamed and unused land being wasted on uncivilized Indigenous peoples. The powers of these external colonial bodies to name other peoples carried within itself also the power to affect the lived experiences of those same peoples. In these lived experiences, identity formation is either or both a theoretical construct and an experiential process.

The accumulation of writings related to or describing Indigenous peoples in Canada has been fairly constant since the arrival of the Europeans on this continent. These writings contribute to what is now a large and continuously growing body of literature that includes journals, diaries, newspaper articles, anthropological treatises, and government correspondence and documentation (Dickason, 1992). These records all use terms that assign names to, or rather re-name, the Indigenous groups that had been pulled into the destructive undercurrents created by British notions of colonization. Bracken describes the re-naming actions as statements of power relations (1997, p.107, 207). He talks about how these actions strip away the power of the Indigenous peoples to own themselves and how the re-naming action itself announces this loss of self-ownership and identity. Whether or not Indigenous peoples accept that these are the impacts we experience as a result of the re-naming actions, we cannot deny that these are the interpretive structures that continue to frame the teachings and lessons of Canadian history as they are handed down through schooling institutions. As such, we are forced to deal with the impact of such theoretical structures when they come home to us through our own minds or through the mouths of our children.

The prevalence of use for this strategy of naming as a means of control over those who are named continues. In contemporary relations between the Indigenous peoples and the state, the strategy is adjusted to appear more acceptable and liberal or less colonizing. However, the state use of names and categories to assign identities to Indigenous peoples continues to distort the focus and contents of negotiations, often pitting one group of Indigenous people against another. The acceptance of state-assigned political identities is often the first step for Indigenous groups who are struggling to "acquire" lands and

resources that may ensure to some degree their survival as a people. In fact, the naming strategy has been practiced long enough by the state that some Indigenous leaders have adopted the tactic in an effort to advantage their specific group over another Indigenous group. This suggests that a coerced process of self- identification is taking place amongst Indigenous peoples in response to the pressures of the state to enter into "negotiations" for self-government and land. To require, as a condition of negotiations, that Indigenous peoples organize and, if necessary, create political identities according to state criteria and demands is already to favour the state, or from an alternative discourse and interpretation, the colonial power. Those Indigenous groups who accept the state demands and participate in the creation of non-Indigenous forms of social organization that include re-naming and re-structuring processes of interaction invariably find themselves in relationships of increasing dependency upon the state, and often at odds with other Indigenous groups.

The formation of the First Nation at Cadotte Lake and the First Nation at Loon River are typical examples in Northern Alberta of how state-determined processes of self-government negotiations for land and resources led to the creation of re-named and re-structured groups of Indigenous people who had once stood together as the people of Lubicon. The group had held together through tremendous political adversity, attempting to protect their traditional hunting and trapping territory against the combined forces of industry and state represented by oil and gas companies, the pulp and paper industry, and the governments of Alberta and Canada. The scales tipped against Lubicon Lake when, after long years of poverty, political pressures, and social difficulties, two groups of the people accepted the governments' offer of what has come to be referred to as "modern" treaties. Although these people had lived in their own territories and communities for generations, these "modern" treaties included the state establishment of a new "First Nation" with a new name and an election process to vote in a new chief and council, a reserve of land, a state-defined form of self-government, along with promises of new facilities and infrastructure for their community and what probably seemed like more than enough financial resources to promise a secure future.

Essentially, from the 1970's to the late 1980's, the choices for the people had lessened with each passing year as their traditional way of life had begun to crumble; there was

little or no hope in sight as the popular media belittled the political position of Lubicon as one of greed; the courts wrangled over Aboriginal rights and entitlement and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police protected the industries as they continued their clear-cutting and drilling, destroying traplines and hunting territories indiscriminately, without repercussion or penalty. Like the chiefs of a hundred years ago, the newly elected leaders of the new First Nations made difficult choices in very difficult situations.

Lubicon is an event of our time, it represents our history, our work, our accomplishments and our failures. So does the Metis Settlements-Alberta Government Accord of 1990, the formation of Nunavut and ////, and all the other "modern" treaties that have been shaped in this country over the last two decades. The absence of public disbelief and abhorrence that would logically shroud the processes, conclusions, and outcomes of these structures and events is stark and frightening evidence that most Canadians including Indigenous peoples are not aware of the significance of these events in our own country and in the same way, we certainly cannot be aware of what is happening within the lifeworlds of Indigenous peoples.

This is not a research project on self-government processes involving Indigenous peoples in Canada, but these processes have had and continue to have tremendous impacts on identity formation and consciousness development processes for Northern Alberta Indigenous peoples. It is not however within the scope of this research to provide the information and analysis that is necessary in order to fully understand the processes and events as well as their impacts on identity and consciousness, both as individuals and collectivity. While these impacts are not directly addressed here, they are certainly at the source or underlay the lived experiences that are the heart of the descriptions and interpretations that form the body of this work.

A brief discussion of the effect of re-naming in one case might help to put this section into perspective in relation to my overall topic. The effect of re-naming within the political realm of self-government negotiations has already been evidenced in Canada where two recent Agreements signed between the federal government and Indigenous peoples have already been challenged by other Indigenous groups not included in the negotiations. The challenge is based on the fact that the final Agreements include

geographical locations that name traditional hunting territories belonging to Indigenous groups who were not consulted during the negotiations. These lands are held by the people to be critical to their identities as Indigenous individuals and collectives. The Indigenous group which was signatory to the Agreement signed as represent ting a particular Indigenous collective. It is likely that they were aware of all rights and inevitable claims to the territories included in the Agreement since Land Claims Agreements tend to be based upon historical land uses and Indigenous peoples, especially in the North, adhere closely to historical family or clan territorial rights to land use. Respecting these rights was significant to survival of the people.

In this case, the fact that an Indigenous group did not give credence to or raise the issue of crossing boundaries into territory belonging to another Indigenous group prior to the signing suggests that externally-driven political identities have minimal or no connection with the ways in which Indigenous peoples self-identify. This seems to be true in two respects. First, the territory claimed by the second group was integral to their self-identification and life-experiences in a historical sense. Yet, it was handed over to a newly-formed political identity which accepted the territory, seemingly without consideration given to their own self-identification which would also be connected to and bounded within certain historical and geographical areas, not necessarily including the land in question. Second, the basis and strength of the claim to the "stolen" territory seems to rest on the self-identification and social history of the Indigenous group presenting the challenge. The group that was formed as a political identity, on the other hand, has no basis of claim to the territory and no basis of defense for its actions. Despite the suggestion of conflict that is inherent in this description of the situation, the facts to date as provided by the media are (1) the new group, politically created and ascribed a politically motivated identity made no claim to the territory (it was simply included by the government negotiators) and (2) the group as political identity had not taken any overt action to either accept or reject the territory; it had simply let things happen as set out by the government negotiators.

This situation exemplifies how self-identity and self-naming are empowering forces connected to Indigenous persons and an Indigenous life world. Their presence results in a willingness to act in opposition to external forces that threaten the well-being of the

collective, or alternatively, to resist such threats with non-compliance. This case also demonstrates how externally-identified or outside naming as reflected in the creation of political identities tends to dehumanize, leading to entities which are presented to the world as Indigenous collectivities or groups, but which in fact are politically defined abstractions that have no connection at all with real Indigenous people and/or an Indigenous life-world. It follows then that in the contemporary world of government-defined negotiations, the externally driven political entities representing Indigenous peoples have minimal connections with the people they are held to represent. In the minds of the Indigenous peoples themselves, the political entity has no reality in the Indigenous world.

This helps to explain how and why whole communities of Indigenous people can and do disregard the blatant misuse and abuse of "power" which flows from the Canadian state as represented by either/or both levels of government to the "leaders" (s)elected according to "outside" systems and political process dictated by that same state. Such community forms of "local" government are perceived correctly to be non-Indigenous and therefore as having no connection with what is believed to be significant and meaningful in the Indigenous world. Those who become "community leaders" are not usually recognized in their "leadership" capacity as having any connection with Indigenous reality. They are seen instead to be the connection with the non-Indigenous world. It is a common observation that many Indigenous communities "elect" representatives or spokespersons who are perceived to be in good relationship with the non-Indigenous state, and/or who can best accommodate non-Indigenous objectives, attitudes and practices without entering into dispute or challenges. The fear as I have had it explained to me is that such challenges would lead the state to turn its back on the Indigenous communities and the people would suffer as a result.[8]

---

[8] This is not to ignore the fact that in most Indigenous communities in the north, the democratic system of election of leaders does not serve the interests of the people, nor does it fit the social structures and organization of Indigenous communities. Most 'older' Cree and Metis communities are composed of several family groups, with a smaller portion of the population being nuclear families of 'newcomers'. Under democracy, with its seemingly equitable "one vote, one person" structure, the largest family group is guaranteed to maintain control of representative forms of leadership especially in state-

White Canadians do not as a rule concern themselves with the effects of "outside naming" (Chartrand, 1991) because the names they apply to themselves are of their own creation and choosing. However, the implications of naming on Indigenous identity are obviously significant in social and political terms. Naming therefore must be recognized as a critical factor in Indigenous identity formation in Canada. It follows, then, that we must also recognize the role of the state as an external force in affecting the shape of Indigenous identities and Indigenous communities through its practice of assigning names to Indigenous groups. Though the practice is ostensibly for political expediency, the naming practices of both levels of government in Canada continues to impact personally and socially on the lives of all Indigenous peoples. Outside-naming of things, events, and relationships which are somehow connected to Indigenous people is one way of describing who we are in our own life-worlds. When we accept or adopt these namings as accurate and meaningful, we need also to know that whoever holds the power to name holds the power to define identity.

The creation of political identities according to externally -driven forces is a familiar event in most Indigenous communities, and so are the negative and destructive effects that flow in the wake of such events. Many individuals, families, and communities with their own sense of being and interconnectedness cannot or will not easily give up who they are in order to accommodate an external view of who they should be or need to be in order to fulfill an external mandate. At the same time, Indigenous persons cannot avoid the parameters of identity established by these names conferred upon them historically and legally by the governments of the Europeans and the Canadians. Doing a Keywords Search on the Library Holdings at the University of Alberta brings up the following data to support my statement: "Indian" has 34,970 entries, "Metis" has 3,119 entries, "Aboriginal" has 5,160 entries, and "Inuit" has 10,323 entries. Or "First Nations" has 1,089, "Indigenous" has 1,822, and "Halfbreed" has 54. The term "Native" threatened to

---

dictated models of self- or local government. This type of system tends to be supported by the state because it is easier to negotiate and meet the goals of one family than it is to negotiate with a leadership that acts for the benefit of the people as collective. The people themselves recognize clearly how power is given and how it is negotiated in contemporary systems of what is referred to as self-government. They also observe the consequences of challenging the state and its representative form of self-government.

blow the system. Yet, it is important to recognize that these "names", which most people take for granted as socially acceptable even to those people so identified, are the most obvious words which are impacting on Indigenous identity today. When we consider that the various Indigenous groups use different systems of naming for themselves according to different contexts, the existence and widespread recognition, acceptance and usage of these formal names highlights the gap between how Indigenous persons identify themselves and how others, outside of the Indigenous groups, identify them.

The formal names ascribed to Aboriginal Peoples are generally a part of the vocabulary that indicates some form of explicit acquiescence (e.g. signing of treaties, contracts, etc.) with the demands of a state institution or other agency or level of government. A steady flow of legislation and amendments to legislation has helped to maintain a sense of instability when it comes to the identification of Indigenous groups. Consider that "Indian" as a generic term of legal and formal identification can refer to "status Indian", "non-status Indian", "Treaty Indian" or the more recent "Bill C-31"[9]. There are hundreds of cases where individuals lived their whole lives with one legal identity and then found themselves adjusting to a second legal or formal identity. The most common ones were Metis people who assumed "Indian" status under the Indian Act through the provisions of Bill C-31. These people had lived as Metis and self-identified as Metis. Yet in some cases they were no longer accepted as Metis even in their own communities[10]. If the impacts of these legal definitions could be confined to theories on paper, there would minimal concern with their impacts on identity formation in Indigenous communities.

---

[9] BillC-31 refers to federal legislation passed in 1985. The intent of this legislation was primarily to permit the reinstatement of Indigenous women who had lost their "Indian" status and accompanying treaty rights, most of them as a result of marriage to non-Indian partners. Their children also had lost their rights and status. The legislation fell short of its stated intent because its delegated enforcement of the legislation to the bands without providing any additional land or resources to meet the needs of a large influx of reinstated 'band' members. The problem remains unresolved and the source of conflict and dissension in many Indigenous communities.

[10] The most obvious examples of the negative impact of legislation affecting Indigenous identity are visible in the disintegrating impact of identity issues on Metis Settlement communities since they have had to deal with the effects of both provincial legislation (Resolution 18 in 1985 culminating in the Alberta Government-Metis Settlements Accord in 1990) and federal legislation (Bill C-31 also in 1985).

The reality is, however, that the effects of this "outside naming" has been and continues to be a destructive element in the development of Indigenous peoples and their communities in general, and to the normal processes of individual identity formation in particular.

The problems associated with "outside-naming" of Indigenous peoples in Canada are discussed by Paul L.A.H. Chartrand (Chartrand, 1991). Though Chartrand tends to situate his text within a legal and political framework, it is not difficult to extrapolate the substance of his article into the context of a discussion on identity formation and consciousness. In providing a brief history, for example, of the Metis people in Canada, Chartrand comments on the term "Half-Breed" as it is used in the literature: "It is difficult to imagine a better illustration of the settler's use of zoological terms as described earlier by Fanon, than 'Half-Breed' or its shortened version, 'Breed'" (Chartrand, 1991, p. 12). Chartrand had earlier quoted Fanon to talk about the many ways that the colonial world tries to subjugate the Aboriginal peoples, including 'outside-naming' and the denial of history. In reference to the term "Halfbreed", Fanon says "In fact, the terms the settler uses when he mentions the native are zoological terms..." (Fanon, 1963, cited in Chartrand, 1991, p.6).

This discussion is tending in two directions, both of which have brought forth points that refer to implicit understandings required to situate my work appropriately within the Indigenous perspective. Firstly, to talk about the act of naming introduces a specific way to illustrate the power of words. Words and their impact on identity formation and consciousness is a fundamental part of my work. From words, due consideration must be given to the place of language in identity and consciousness. This is especially true where language along with its development and usage is embedded within political and social factors that are beyond the control of the language learners and users themselves.

Secondly, Aboriginal peoples in Canada have been subjected to continuous states of social and political powerlessness such that even their own naming has come from the "settler" society. Indigenous peoples have been working to maintain their own processes of self-government and self-determination since the formal and informal interruptions of their societies with the arrival of the Europeans. These processes have included self-

naming and, therefore, self-identification. While it may be difficult for some observers to perceive that these efforts towards self-determinations have never ceased on the part of the Indigenous peoples, some of the difficulty in achieving an accurate perception is that an illusion of Indigenous acquiescence and willing subservience to a greater and more knowledgeable non-Indigenous power has been created and continues to be maintained. One of the critical means of maintaining this illusion is through words or language. Hence, for this work the emphasis is on the power of the word, the significance of language, and the role of interaction and shared meanings in the creation of Indigenous reality through Indigenous identity reflecting the embodiment of Indigenous consciousness.

This might be a good place to insert an example of Indigenous reality to demonstrate how political naming and Indigenous consciousness and notions of identity can be and are worlds apart. The Red Lake community[11] was a mixture of Metis/Halfbreed, Indians, and Whites. The people lived together as a community with the different groups maintaining strong identities as individuals and as collectives. This went on for generations. One day the outside entered in the form of White missionaries. These people came in penniless, but out of the goodness of their hearts, they brought the Christian message. Their religious message did not make any significant impact. However, they also brought in a nurse. They brought in road improvements, and they cleared bush and trees for a community project where they said they could teach the people to grow gardens. Of course nobody needed to be taught how to garden. The Metis/Halfbreed families already knew what they needed to know since their whole lives depended on gardens. Most of the Indian families did not plant gardens at all; some families grew certain vegetables such as potatoes. The White people did not seem to be the intended beneficiaries of the missionaries' teachings.

In the end, the land that had been donated to the missionaries for the community garden was transformed into small lots for the housing program that had been requested by the missionaries and approved by the government. They had agreed that the Natives needed to have proper housing. Now that the housing was provided, the nursing was provided,

---

[11] Red Lake is a fictitious name to protect identities but the events related are real.

education was provided, the road was provided, and new forms of economic activity were provided, the missionaries turned their attention to the formation of a local governing body eventually called the Red Lake Community Association. Through this new political identity, certain individuals were encouraged and elected as appropriate leaders on this community -governing body. A large part of the Indigenous population and a large part of the White population continued to conduct its affairs as best as it could around the doings of these outsiders and without too much internal disruption. A small number of individuals, both White and Indigenous, joined in the "political" activities and became community "spokespersons" at meetings which were called by the missionaries and to which the government officials were invited. Very gradually, the "community organization" moved the community as a whole into a position where it could no longer avoid the system of "local government" that had been set up by the missionaries. The state through its provincial funding agencies and its local government officials was involved and the missionaries and the "leaders" who had taken over from them had changed the face of the community. Community members who objected were ridiculed by their own people and were told that the times had changed.

It was not that the times had changed or that progress had happened. The missionaries had interjected factors which created complications and a sense of disorder in a community which had always ordered and managed its own changes, for the good of every community member or not. It was a significant observation made by a community elder several years after the arrival and departure of the formal "missionizing" body that a good number of the missionaries came into the community with nothing except themselves and their children and they left the community with more "worldly" goods than those possessed by any of the people whom they came to "serve". Some of this reflected different values around the accumulation of property, but certainly not all of it. By itself, it demonstrated individual priorities and values.

The people had always been independent and prided themselves on building and owning their own homes, on providing their own food, and on finding their own forms of employment and entertainment. Now many of them lived in government housing on which they had to make regular payments and which therefore required a form of employment that would bring in a regular monetary income. Canada Mortgage &

Housing Corporation was not open to payments made through barter and fur trade. The community reliance on the missionaries to negotiate with the government and ensure that employment opportunities were available was heightened.

In turn, the missionaries became more visible to the government and the outside world as liaison persons working on behalf of the natives. What had been an "isolated" and self-reliant community had become a place where that portion of the population that relied on the "outside" world for its direction and its existence became the voice for the community. The rest of the community entered into and out of the stream of "modernization" according to individual choices based on needs, opportunities (most often tied to economics) and priorities.

To summarize the story, most of the missionaries moved away from the community when their own children were of age to go into the local school. The "local" people were left to deal with the confusing and confused remains of a once stable community of self-reliant and mutually accepting (within clearly defined cultural and social parameters) individuals and groups. The local "leaders" had been trained to seek answers to community issues and concerns from the outside government and its official bureaucrats – a 'resource' that had probably been accessed previously and only on occasion by some members of the White community. The new leaders had also been "taught" how to carry out the recommendations and solutions of the government bureaucrats. Most of the community members minded their own affairs as much as possible, accepting those things that improved personal and familial life if they were accessible, and tried to stay out of the way of this type of "progress".

Today, these conditions still exist, with a greater degree of subtlety and more distance to the involvements of the government and its officials. Most leaders are still selected according to how the voters perceive their capability to access services from the government. Now that most Indigenous communities rely on the government, directly or indirectly, for all their services, only those persons who are visibly supported by, or at least are not seen as being in opposition to, the outside government in power can anticipate being elected locally with any degree of confidence. Since observations and experiences have shown that the "outside" voice continues to carry more weight with the

government than any "Native" voice, the Native elected voice tends to take on the political identity using the same language as the outside voice. In that way, the government will listen and the community will be served.

No one ever interprets this voice as having anything to do with individual identity or consciousness. It has only to do with survival and the capacity to make individual choices. But since it is from these - survival and human capacity - that identity flows and consciousness develops, then surely political identity and imposed social systems determine and affect identity and consciousness.

Cohen and Rapport make the point that "past anthropological practice" treated the individual as "identical to" or "derivable from" the collective, and in this manner, misrepresented "individuality and selfhood by gross simplification" (1995, p.4). This is a good beginning point but discourse conducted amongst anthropologists will not make any difference to the type or degree of impact that research can and does have on the actual and individual identities of those persons who are "being talked about", in old anthropological terms, or "who have participated", in newer anthropological terms. Discourse flows from words connected to the creation of meanings. These meanings form the impetus for action and experiences. In that manner, we can say that words or discourse can affect and even determine the impact of anthropological research on individual persons directly involved with the research.

If the discourse about the many and varied aspects of anthropological research excludes those who are being studied, then its words are empty and have no power to affect anything. They merely strengthen and elaborate the mental constructs of anthropology or ethnography in the minds of those who talk about. In this instance, these words have no power. They will only have power when there is action conducted according to the mental constructs. With action, it will become clear whether or not the power is for good or bad.

In an earlier chapter, I shared a shard of personal experience of the impact of an anthropological action that entailed not merely a concrete physicality but also a theoretical discourse based on that physicality. In fact, the discourse is the more powerful element at work in the interactions occasioned by the research. To elaborate on

this, I want to focus on some of the words contributed to the discourse on the anthropology of consciousness by James Fernandez (1995). To contextualize what he presents, Fernandez recognizes that his own consciousness or Personal Thought Line (PTL) is implicated by the PTL or consciousness of those he studies and the PTL's or consciousnesses of his peers. He speaks in "good" words - words that sound as if those who are studied and those who study are playing the same game, enhancing each other's understandings about self-consciousness. At the same time, he raises the issue of how an ethnographer would put forward a thought line to "those among whom we do our ethnographies *in any way that will be relevant* to their self-consciousness" (my italics, p.24). While Fernandez sees the PTL's of the "others" (those who are studied) going through a process of "significant conversion" as he elaborates their implications in his own PTL, he believes that *his* conceptualizations from the study would be relevant to the Great Thought Line (GTL) of anthropology in the "Western tradition" but "would be quite beyond any economies of thought my informants were interested in" (p.24). By implication, is he also intimating that their PTL's could not contribute to the GTL of "Western" anthropology without his interpretation? He continues his line of thinking with "it is doubtful that much in either line would be immediately relevant to any deficits in meaning or material well-being they themselves were conscious of needing repair" (Fernandez, p.24).

This reminds me of the Indigenous person who opposed adult literacy programs because they (the programs) "made" people (Indigenous people) unhappy and dissatisfied with their lives (of poverty and dependence, in most cases). Essentially, the argument was that if they did not know what they were missing, they would continue to accept without question or dissatisfaction what they did have. In other words, if they were taught to "see" a world other than the one of their traplines and their outdoor toilets, for example, they would end up wanting things that they couldn't really have (like indoor plumbing), or wouldn't know how to appreciate if they did have. The most discouraging part of the discussion was that this argument was also being applied to the "teaching" of critical thinking, deconstruction, Indigenous consciousness, anything that wasn't in the state-approved Adult Basic Literacy curriculum to be learned by rote. These ideas suggest and represent a very dangerous distortion in the thinking of any individual involved actively

in the lives of Indigenous people anywhere. Yet it might easily be recognized and termed the Indigenous version of the 'consciousness' represented by the colonizing nation-builders.

I wonder if and how Fernandez would connect what he is saying with the notion of conscientization (Paulo Freire 1978, p. 19,20). Or, how he would connect his words to the universal acknowledgement that all peoples, including those he studies, are involved in and have the right to engage in their own processes of knowledge creation and the appropriate expressions of their own knowledge forms.

Fernandez also comments on the "discrepancy of discourses between fieldwork and subsequent interpretation in academic milieux"(Cohen & Rapport, p.2 5). He talks about how he is invited to speak on his ethnographies and his conceptualizations based on that fieldwork in many parts of the world. The participants in the seminars and talks are often from "rural milieux" which are similar to that of the ethnographic material which is being conceptualized. He describes this situation in disparaging tones, almost mockingly, as if he were somehow outside of its creation and beyond the reach of those real persons who are present with him in the room and whose lives were being implicated by his conceptualizations. A discourse of liberal theories of mutuality and reciprocity is comfortable if it is unchallenged by the presence of real persons with real life experiences.

The challenge to ethnographic conceptualizations by persons from the "village milieux" under scrutiny cannot be explained away by recourse to the notion of a "globalized anthropology" with easy movement between "cultural vessels". Fernandez tries to create a sense of acceptability with his dismissal of the situation he is describing, however, his remarks strike me as arrogant and glib: "Therefore, as the world turns, the separation of discourses is happily or unhappily compromised, at least for those villagers, quite a few actually, who have gone on for an education" (Fernandez, 1995, p.25). He implies unquestioningly that being "happily or unhappily compromised" through discourse is only a problem for "villagers", and then only for those of a particular type.

I have taken some effort to point out that studies on Indigenous people are not harmless academic and abstract pursuits that leave no trail. At the same time I have used the words

of James Fernandez to hopefully strengthen my point that the interaction and participation of "village persons" doesn't end with the ethnographic description; it continues on into the conceptualization or interpretation stage of the enquiry as well. Whether or not the "villagers" conceptualization finds its way into or is considered in the formal end report is totally dependent upon the particular researcher. That doesn't in any way negate the fact that this stage will take place in "villager" interactions. Fernandez describes consciousness as a product of our needs to communicate with and relate to others. His position is very clear that we cannot truly know others' minds (which I am taking to mean consciousness) but we can learn from them and admire them (Fernandez, 1995,p.26).

Fernandez describes exotic characters in terms of imaginations and actions that are taken to improve or maintain a sense of individual identity. These individual identities are nothing except in relation to their social milieux. Fernandez refers to this individual focus on "meaning deficits" within individual and group identity as "category consciousness", a critical component of identity (Fernandez, 1995, p.28). In his examples, individuals utilize material and mystical world forces/powers in attempts to remove the deficits to their individual identities in ways which will situate them comfortably within the collective identity.

Consciousness as primarily an outcome and a process of social categorization has applicability in at least one perspective of my work. According to Fernandez, consciousness of self "arises from a comfortable or uncomfortable awareness of the difference between the category or categories to which one has been socially assigned and one's own individual and often lonely sense of self" (p.37). Recall that one part of Indigenous reality is based on a shifting foundation of legal definitions and socially assigned categories of identity. This shifting results in very superficial splits and divisions amongst the people. While these categorizations did not create problems or hostility between the people in the communities in the past, the contemporary scene of Indigenous movement towards various forms of self-determination has been designed on the basis of formally assigned social categorizations or, as I have previously referred to them, outside-naming. Assigned social categorization (e.g. Indians and Metis) has proven itself to be advantageous to the state in its negotiations with the different

Indigenous peoples regarding land, self-government and resources. At the same time, these categorizations have affected the ways in which individuals and communities self-identify in social contexts, apart from the political arena. Assigned social categories of identity can be taken up by individuals who have never lived as members of an Indigenous community; they can be internalized as stereotypes learned through schooling and other institutionally controlled settings; they can be accepted as definitions and prescriptions for how to be and how to live when the foundations of Indigenous reality have been shaken, forgotten, or given up. All of these situations can be observed somewhere in the Indigenous world, but that is not to say that the process of identity formation can be limited to such a superficial explanation for how a Cree person or a Metis person becomes a Cree or a Metis. Categories of assigned identity and category consciousness are linked in ways that perpetuate each other, but consciousness is more than both of these, either singly or in combination.

In her essay, *She came out of the field*, Tamara Kohn (Kohn, 1995) describes a visit from her "subject", a young woman from Nepal whose family had helped out the anthropologist for two years during her research in that country. Kamala came to England to visit for six weeks and stayed with the Kohn family. During her visit, Kohn "discovered" from observations and conversations with the girl that being away from home gave her a heightened sense of consciousness of self and home. The realizations came to Kohn that an informant and therefore probably any other person will make new reflections on what is strange and foreign according to what is apparently familiar. She makes a distinction, however, for the anthropologists, like herself who miss the familiar because they are too focussed on the exotic or the different. The new reflections being made by Kamala and shared in the English home setting, far away from her home and what Kohn feels compelled to refer to as "the field", are clear indicators to Kohn that she had missed a great deal of information and data while she was the stranger in Nepal. She describes how Kamala had never shared or discussed her dreams while in Nepal, and that she, Kohn, had not realized the significance of dreams in the Nepali world until Kamala talked about her dreams every day during her visit to England. There were other points which surprised Kohn and which she used to hone her understanding of the villagers she had studied in Nepal.

Kohn implies but doesn't openly recognize that the anthropologist who is the stranger in the field is also operating from a personal and local perspective, even though "local" means back home and "out of the field". Kohn consistently maintains a position and a point of view which places the "villager" or informant at a distance from herself, even when her informant is a guest in her house! She seems however not to recognize or interpret her anthropologizing actions as objectifying Kamala but rather as examples of how "anthropologists are specialists in both etic analyses of all actions and emic analyses of intentional actions" (p. 51). She seems to have convinced herself that in reference to the study of "others", consciousness is accessible to anthropologists through their methodology.

Of course, she has discovered a new methodology to consider, and her comments about that are revealing: "Without attempting to elicit 'data' during her visit to my home, I learned a good deal about Kamala and 'her village', 'her people'. It follows that if one's consciousness is raised through an experience such as travel, then, it is with the traveler, perhaps even within her dreams of home and away, that one can augment or enrich ethnographic accounts of her 'home' society" (p.43).

In summary, Kamala's experiences which arose in connection with her movement from Nepal to England were a significant learning for her. I would also assume, as Kohn suggests, that this learning related to consciousness of self and home. However, I would suggest in addition that another significant part of the learning probably related to a heightened consciousness about anthropologist(s) and how these experts might see and interpret themselves in relation to the people they work with. In consideration of Kohn's learnings, there seemed to be a primary focus on gathering data and analysis of that data, despite her justifiable claim that she was not *attempting* to elicit data from Kamala (Kohn, 1995, p.43). It seemed as though Kohn did not learn anything significant about the persons of Kamala and herself through this process; Kamala was kept in the role of "informant" and Kohn maintained herself as the "anthropologist" doing research. There was no sense of intersubjectivity of researcher and researched, no sense of co-creation of knowledge, no sense of shared meanings; there was always the boundary between researcher and researched. The primary sense of what was happening was that Kamala was pouring out her stuff to Kohn who was busy taking mental notes and analysing.

Despite my discomfort with the tone and perspective of Kohn, I enjoyed the text simply because it was informative to me in an area of study which is new. Kohn presented an open view of herself as both person and anthropologist, and in so doing, revealed an important point about her own consciousness and knowledge. Consciousness of what was happening to Kamala remained at the level of knowledge about Nepal and approaches to anthropological research. Kohn was not able to shift her own being so as to actually increase her own consciousness beyond the movement or re-configuration of facts. In other words, it might be said that she basically made a more complex computation. There was no shift in the state of being; she remained from beginning to end, even when she shifted times and places through her words, a processor of information, observing and analysing according to a bounded system of learned cognitive ordering of mental constructs. She discovered that she had missed a few points of information in Nepal, but she did not discover that she missed an opportunity to participate in the creation of knowledge with a Nepali person. Since that was never one of her stated intentions in the research, the process she describes and sets up will probably not give her that. On the other hand, she does say that she wants to understand the consciousness of others. In my analysis of the text she provides, she will never come close to that objective because her methods do not provide her with the opportunity to break down the separation she maintains between the person she sees as "informant" and herself whom she sees as anthropologist.

A person can always overcome the barriers of a method but it is much more difficult to remove the barriers imposed by one's own perceptions. Where our own perceptions are blocking our development in consciousness, we need an external force to create a shift within us, enabling us to see from a different perspective. The only requirement from us is our willingness and intentions to let something new enter into and interact with our beings. That external force is a teacher, enabling us to see. It may or may not be a person, and we may or may not be good students, but once we learn the relationship between the new and the familiar (as Kohn is starting to) then we can open ourselves to the development of our beings in all aspects. This is the development of consciousness; it is more than the development of complex mental computations or neuronal connections. Even though the development of complex computational skills is an exciting and

wonderful process in consciousness, it is not the same as the development of consciousness in being.

Final comments of relevance to my work in Kohn's chapter are that we study individual consciousness in order to "better describe the collectivity ...which informs it"(p.51). She says, "our method should aim to take in more - the feelings, emotions, dreams and senses which eyes and ears can only partially capture" (p.51). I have already said, in a previous section of this paper, that we cannot describe or focus on the collectivity to arrive at an understanding of individual consciousness, nor can we ever rely upon a method to "take in" feelings, emotions or the meanings of dreams.

Therefore, I cannot agree with Kohn's perspectives that anthropological methods (her definitions of) will open the doors to understanding "other" consciousnesses. In fact, I would have thought that one realization from the outcomes of Kamala's visit would be that the anthropologist who bounds her experiences within the confines of a pre-conditioned structure and/or system will surely be lead away from the people (informants and others in the 'field') and into the further restrictions of his/her own senses and thoughts. I do agree that the method that is selected to do any research is the key to the potential patterns and shapes of the reaching out and the interacting with other persons.

I also agree strongly with Kohn that the key "to consciousness is in the knowing, not in the ability to speak fully of this knowing" (p.15). This point is related to language and the powers and politics of language and its associated articulations. Language is only one critical component affecting research that implicates individual persons and collectivities. If we select our research questions without any connection with the people with whom we wish to consult, we will not find the right context to 'do' our research. This has little to do with them, and everything to do with us and our attitudes from which are derived our methods and our motivations.

The encouraging part of Kohn's narrative was her statements of realizations that what she saw and heard and wrote about wasn't quite everything that was Nepal or its people, even the people she lived with. I also would have felt more hope and promise in her learnings if her writing had shown a little more interest in Kamala the person and less in Kamala

the informant. The content of her chapter would not necessarily have been lost or compromised; there is a very good chance it would have been tremendously enriched.

This notion of shifting place(s) in order to acquire a better understanding of self or others is not new to Indigenous persons. It is highly unusual that anyone would intentionally go on a trip in order to achieve a shift in consciousness or to raise consciousness about self and home; such shifts happen as normal occurrences in daily living. There is very little dramatization or explicit directions on how such experiences can be incorporated into an individual life, but the Indigenous life-world permits and encourages such experiences. Children learn from observation and being with their elders that setting up or creating the space (includes time) for these shifts to happen is a part of growing up and being human. In addition, there are certain ceremonies and rituals which are intended specifically to help the person(s) experience shifts of consciousness, or to experience shifts in states of consciousness, these two being different.

Shifts of consciousness are those occurrences by means of which an individual learns to see the world with from a different perspective, not in the sense only of a cognitive shift where we define perspective as a particular mental alignment. A shift of consciousness is actually closer to seeing the world from a different location of consciousness, not a different location from within a mental construct or cognition. This ability to see the world from different locations of consciousness prepares the being for the development of empathy and compassion, the requirements for a full and enriching life. The social context or the physical environment of a person often presents itself as the most obvious and the most amenable potential support to bring about the shifts in consciousness.

If I can sit under a tree for two hours and, instead of tediousness, experience new learnings that might not be gained in any other position or place, then those learnings are a result of my having chosen to sit under that specific tree for that specific amount of time in exactly that manner and with that particular attitude. When I was a child and first started to learn these ways, there was not much choice involved. The choices came with maturity and as the experiences increased in complexity and in quantity, I gradually learned how to live consciously with the sense of my own consciousness. I do believe that children can be provided guidance and direction in such matters, but the competition

for the child's time in the world of television's invincible and glamorous characters would likely be one challenge. Other, more externally-driven challenges to the Indigenous reality include the stripping of the forests and the natural wilderness environments that are linked inextricably with Indigenous experiences of being as well as the societal demands and expectations to "be" somebody in the contemporary world as defined by "Canadians" or "Americans".

Shifts in states of consciousness refer to those movements within the being from one state to another. These shifts are sought out by the individual for specific and personal reasons. The presence or participation of a teacher in this seeking and deliberate establishment of a means to attain this shift in state is deemed important for the protection and well-being of the seeker, his/her family and his/her life-world. Although the teacher is usually an elder or another person who knows the journey and has accepted responsibility for guiding the "traveler", the teacher may come in any shape or form. Usually it is the seeker who chooses to recognize and accept the teacher, but it may also happen that according to particular and individual reasons, a teacher will select an individual to train, teach or guide.

This is usual in cases of passing on medicine bundles, or herbal and other forms of knowledge that are intended to be handed down through the generations via selected individuals, usually but not exclusively, of one family. This practice of inheritance of responsibility and knowledge does not occur without the individual having earned the right and demonstrated by life experiences that s/he is prepared to carry such responsibility without bringing harm to self or others within the shared life-world. Commonly known and practiced means of assisting individuals to shift states of consciousness are fasting and sweating. Individuals also use dreaming to shift states. The "shaking tent" ceremony and the "dance of the ancestors" are examples of ceremonies which are intended to provide opportunities for a collective shift in consciousness, one which is intergenerational and crosses the boundaries of time and space to invite and join with the presence of the ancestors.

Shifts in consciousness and shifts in states of consciousness which result in more understanding about self and others in the shared life-world of Indigenous people can be

planned into the life-experiences of the individual. Physical space is an important element in the creation of opportunities for these life experiences and Kohn identified shifting physical places as a way to acquire different or expanded perspectives on a cultural reality such as the "field".

Other anthropological essays from the collection by Cohen and Rapport (1995) which I found useful to my own thinking were: (1) Andrew Strathern's article where he speaks to the ways in which healing practices involving trance can demonstrate the inter-relationship between embodiment, agency, and consciousness, and support the notion that "consciousness is included in the concept of the mindful body" (p.130) and as such contains both psychogenic and sociogenic components, and (2) Bruce Kapferer's article where he talks about sorcery practices to show that these are based upon intentionality and an "implicit recognition that the consciousness of human beings is formed in-the-world" (Kapferer 1995, p. 137). Kapferer builds his position on intentionality as the "root of social worlds" (p.137), intentionality referring to the directionality of all action, and not necessarily having any reason or value. He sees sorcery practices as marking the "intentionality of human consciousness as simultaneously basic to the construction and destruction of the psychosocial worlds of human being" (p.137).

The literature base that I have drawn upon is from fairly disparate fields of study, but I have tried to make it clear that these texts speak most succinctly to my own interpretations and experiences of identity formation and consciousness within an Indigenous life-world. Further, these texts have been useful in the interactive, intersubjective approach that I have used during my time with other Indigenous researchers exactly because they speak about or at least intimate (in my interpretation) meaningful referencing to concepts which are a part of the Indigenous life-world in which I situate this work. The various ways in which the literature addresses such concepts are not immediately transferable to the Indigenous experience, nor can they be immediately or easily unified into one significant and cohesive theoretical whole. They are the pieces of this moments' answer, and they have helped me to move into my own spaces of words and thoughts. I recognized the pieces when I saw them, I knew which pieces belonged in the one, but I had never seen this particular version of the whole. In some way, perhaps it was at this point that if I had known and could have articulated the

question, I would have known exactly where and how the pieces went together. But the moment passed and the work went on its own trail. One sense of the moment remains, however: by accepting the many and separate pieces of knowledge and wisdom that had come to me, I was enriched as were the beings of those people who participated with me in this work.

Other texts to which I referred in my work on consciousness specifically and which provided a base of knowledge about consciousness theories from a Western academic perspective were *The Evolution of Consciousness* (Ornstein, 1992), *Fractals of Brain, Fractals of Mind* edit. MacCormac &Stamenov, 1996), and "Neurophenomenology: A Methodological Remedy for the Hard Problem" by Francisco J. Varela in *Explaining Consciousness* (Shear, 1997).

**Category 2: Psycho-Social Dimensions of Identity Formation and Consciousness**

The second category in this literature review will introduce those texts that speak to particular and critical psycho- social dimensions of identity formation and consciousness. Those dimensions that I have identified for inclusion are memory, space and time in the constitution of individual and collective history, and the human response to living under prolonged conditions of violence and war. I believe that these particular dimensions carry a strong impact on identity formation and consciousness for Indigenous people and that they are rarely named and/or considered in this light. The authors of the four primary selections in this category tended to make rather severe breaks with traditionally accepted patterns of "modern" academic thought and bodies of literature that support their particular fields of study.

Jonathan Boyarin, editor of *Remapping Memory: The Politics of TimeSpace* has collected a number of articles that look at history from the perspectives of conflicting memories in relation to time and space. The authors' focus is intended to "help to share and develop ways of analysing historical self-constructions of human groups, and their construction of the spaces which they shape and which shape them" (Boyarin, 1994). Boyarin's essay explores the changing theories of time and space. Time and space are no longer perceived as absolutes and universals but the bifurcation between them is still evident in social theory discourse to which he refers. Spatialization and temporalization discourses

are still necessary but time and space are constructs of human consciousness. To say that time and space are constructs of human consciousness has not significantly changed how people ordinarily look at space and time. We think of ourselves as bodies in space moving through time in a straight line. That is the way we have experienced ourselves to be. The rest is philosophy and discourse.

This collection of essays presents powerful examples of the significance of that discourse to "subjugated" peoples and knowledge systems. The writers describe situations of conflict which show how the state/nation controls or attempts to control memory and therefore history or time, and territory and therefore, space. The state/nation ensures its continuation through its use of dimensionality and its control of the discourses of spatiality and temporality. We can observe through the examples within these essays how the recording of history has served the state, and we see this from the perspective of the people who have challenged the attempted state robbery of memories (history/time) and identities (space/bodies). What those people engaged in is life-experiences in life-worlds; what we engage in is discourse. Those life-experiences of those people being talked-about are the substance from which are formulated our discourse. Without those experiences and these types of discourses, the epistemology and ideology which are created and maintained by the nation/state as objective and universal will continue to feed the rhetoric it uses to justify control of identities and spaces.

Epistemology and ideology justify the establishment of a nation with a single sovereign state that continuously empowers itself as the appropriate body to map, set boundaries, and determine membership within itself. The artificial nature of the discourse (e.g. multiculturalism, pluralism, diversity) flowing from such epistemology and ideology tends to go unchallenged by those groups (identities) that have been subsumed or subjugated or marginalized. Even where they challenge, such challenges go unheeded or are swallowed up into the artificiality of the discourse itself.

This absence of a critical discourse from those who have been subjugated to an epistemology and an ideology which essentially wipe out their histories and their identities is of course primarily true only in the realm of discourse. The essays in Boyarin's book attest to the variety of ways in which courageous struggles are on-going

by those who are expected to "disappear" from time and from space, essentially, to give up their identities. They are expected to give up their identities to an abstraction – a bounded space called a modern nation with a sovereign state to control its history and its identity. Why would people give up their identities for that abstraction? The argument could be made that those who give up their identities to acquire a new one which has essentially been created in the interests, usually economic and capital, of the state and/or the nation, must gain something greater than what they have given up.

The nation and the state must be separated because at one point in the formation or creation of the nation, there was a state, a body of individuals that controlled space. Eventually, they had to control time, also, if they were to create and maintain a sense of nation-hood. The nation was composed of those persons who gave up their identities to assume that identity granted by the state in its definition of nation-al membership. Those who now comprise the new nation will require a history and a space that validates their new identity. Hence the significance of discourse in the creation of epistemology and ideology. Here, it seems is one perspective on the workings of colonial relationships.

If we now take the Indigenous peoples of this space called Canada and we layer a map of their identities and spaces over what has become "accepted" and "known" as the nation of Canada we can immediately perceive that it is "Canadians" who require a history and a space which validates their identities. From this perspective, it becomes obvious that control of discourse relating to dimensionality is as critical to the perception of nation-al security as the control of dimensionality itself when seen through history and the allocation and utilization of space. Canadians know they are Canadians because they live within an epistemology which gives them their identities, their histories and their lands. Within the ordinary human experience, we do not normally find ourselves immersed within a discourse about time and space, but it is discourse which creates epistemology and ideology. Then, it is this epistemology and this ideology that underlies the formation of individual and collective identities. An individual identity process occurs within an epistemology with or without the conscious participation of the individual in the discourse creating and re-creating the epistemology of that particular life-world.

Applying this notion to an identity created by a nation/state suggests that an epistemology at work in this case is rigid and changeless, having characteristics of the lifeless and mechanical, and therefore being incapable of sustaining life and the creative and re-creative capacities of a life-world. The logical source of this lifelessness would lie in the rigid management focus required by the sovereign state to maintain its control over the membership of the nation in order to protect the nation from its own process of disintegration. This process of disintegration, otherwise, would be inevitable because identities, whether created by nation/states of colonial powers or Indigenous to particular spaces, belong to living beings who will naturally seek to create personal meaning in their life-worlds. Within this search for meaning lies the power and potential for the natural cycles of disintegration and re-creation in both individuals and their life-worlds. To follow through with this particular perspective, it would seem reasonable then, that the state would benefit from excluded identities which it could use as a foil for those included in the nation-al identity. This could be one small but powerful way of ensuring the nation-al identities' adherence to a discourse that isolates and blinds epistemologically.

This reminds me of a discourse that is aimed specifically at Indigenous people: the missionaries' message to Indigenous people that we should accept our place in society (that is as excluded) without resorting to conflict or challenge or violence because we are predestined to save the planet and the other "races" or more specifically, the "white people", from themselves. This is not to ignore or deny the prophecies and teachings from the various Indigenous peoples and elders themselves about our functions and roles in terms of global inter-connectedness. It is merely to point out that there are many discourses at work within an epistemology which controls us as Indigenous peoples and that some of these discourses can and do use our own words.

In Boyarin's anthology, memory and dimensionality are discussed in the context of individual and collective identities. His own essays conclude "that two ethics, as yet separated, be brought together: our sense of common human identification with people of the past, and our solidarity with living people everywhere" (Boyarin 1994, p. x, Introduction.). The links with our ancestors are based upon the strongest of memories and Boyarin emphasizes the significance of recognizing the embodied memories of our

distant contemporaries as one way of maintaining ''the self-organization of the living' (Atlan, 1985 cited in Boyarin 1994, p.27). Boyarin discusses memory as being embodied, extending from the individual body/memory to collective memory and the politics of memory in the creation and maintenance of the nation-state. One cited example shows how the nation/state uses discourse and dimensionality to subjugate and exclude other identities. His point for the example, was Nadel-Klein's ethnography of localism in Scotland ("Reweaving the Fringe; Localism, Tradition and Representation in British Ethnography" 1991) where she did not take a spatialist or chronological analysis in describing "local identities". They were neither "autochthonous givens" nor elements of "nostalgia". From her work, he quotes: "global processes call localities into existence, but make no commitments to their continued survival..." (Nadel-Klein 1991, p.502 cited in Boyarin 1994, p. 8). Nadel-Klein's work is focussed on "dimensional disenfranchisement: people identified as 'local', hence non-global, particular, and backward, are 'barred from participating in change because they are defined as incapable of sharing not only the same space but also the same time or epoch as modern society'" (Nadel-Klein, 1991, p.503 cited in Boyarin 1994 p.8).

The concept of "dimensional disenfranchisement" is applicable to the Indigenous life-world in which I work. This type of disenfranchisement has followed a strategy honed to perfection and used with high precision in the Northern Indigenous communities, certainly in those with which I am familiar across the northern half of Alberta. Here, the disenfranchisement is brought into effect whenever it is deemed necessary to protect the interests of the state or the nation-al identity. Those who are included in the nation-al identity are protected within the collectivity created by the cogent use of memory and bounded space and those who are disenfranchised remain outside the boundaries of the nation, excluded from participation for reasons which may be explained in relation to dimensional disenfranchisement. These are the ones who are described as traditional, primitive, and superstitious, still tied to the hunter-gatherer mentality, their sense of individuality subsumed into their tribal collectives. To recognize identities and epistemologies that existed prior to those sanctioned and promoted by the state might result in challenges too great for stability of the nation-al identity. Further, claims to

space based on memories and the embodiment of history within identities (historicity of identities) challenge the boundaries and claims of the state and the nation.

Other essays in Boyarin speak

> of memories of repression, of the "politics of forgetting and remembering" during the military rule in Argentina when people became "not only mute but also deaf and blind", learning "'not to see' what was happening" and what was "not their business to know" (Perelli 1994, p.43);
>
> of "blood memory", of the "dominant processes of spatial containment" (p.104) that mark boundaries and determine whose and what experiences will be memorialized in the urban renewal attempts of Hiroshima "to reregister atom bomb memories...on a 'proper' terrain" (p.129) and the "strategies of deconfinement" (p.104) employed by individuals in their struggles for space in "representations of Hiroshima's history and identity" (Yoneyama 1994, p.104);
>
> of the struggle between two "subjugated" (p.92) groups, the Miskitu Indian people and the Nicaraguan nation with each holding forth "conflicting definitions of land rights" ( based upon "two equally irreconcilable historical narratives" (p.68), and where the author assumes that he can accurately interpret at face value the "historical explanation" (p.69) and the narratives he gathers as his data for addressing the "politics of memory" (Hale 1994, p.69);
>
> of the "problematics of modern Jewish identity" and Zionism in the context of Hegelian notions of history where the state is the "proper and only vehicle of progress" (xii) and where that view of history leaves no room for "a sense of identity grounded in Jewish communities that did not depend on state sovereignty for their collective identity" (p.143), but "relies on the contingent narrative associations between generations that are coming and those that are going" (Boyarin 1994, p.144);
>
> of the "claiming of space" by women activists in Argentina and England, in particular those mothers who by their bodily presence, circling the plaza in the main square in Buenos Aires "every Thursday afternoon at 3:30" (p.197)give life and presence to those who have "disappeared", who have been "denied an identity or even a name" (p.198), who by the actions of the women become the "subject who refuses to die, the subject who has been reembodied and now cannot be killed and, as such, doubly challenges the juntas' 'arranged absence' of the disappeared" (Schirmer 1994, p.198);
>
> of race and class in relation to the nation of Trinidad where the past is "continuous with the present" and ancestral differences amongst the various peoples of the nation are perceived as "enduring and omnipresent" with class positions being carried forward into the present from "an imagined past , when social stratification was supposedly without ambiguity, complexity, or fluidity" (Segal 1994, p.235).

Other works in this category of literature are *Minefields in Their Hearts* (Apfel and Simon, 1996), *The Potlatch Papers* A Colonial Case History (Bracken, 1997), *Prey Into Hunter* The Politics of Religious Experience (Bloch, 1992).

**Category 3: Ethnographies and Narratives of Northern Indigenous Peoples**

The third category of the literature reviews those ethnographic texts specifically focussed on Indigenous peoples of the northern parts of the four Western provinces of Canada and those border areas between these provinces and Yukon and the NWT. The primary texts here are *Maps and Dreams* (Brody, 1981), *The Orders of the Dreamed* including "On Nelson's Text" by Stan Cuthand and "On The Ethics of Publishing Historical Documents" by Emma LaRocque (Brown and Brightman, 1988), *The Ojibwa of Berens River, Manitoba*: Ethnography into History by A. Irving Hallowell (Brown, 1992), *Ways of Knowing* (Goulet, 1998), *Prophecy and Power Among the Dogrib Indians* (Helm, 1994), and *Wolverine Myths and Visions* (Moore and Wheelock, 1990). It is this selected group of writings which represents that research which has already been done and which can be viewed as directly related and meaningful to my own research. In a significant way, reviewing this collection served as the initial steps to the "data-gathering" process. It would be more accurate to say that this information fed into the "data-creating" process that characterized most of the project. I am also very well aware that there are a number of other relevant literary sources that I have not investigated (e.g. various missionary and church documents).

Because some sources are parts of the "facts" in the recorded past of the people with whom I have done this research, they do have impacts on identity and consciousness, both as indicators of "outside" interpretations and descriptions of historical events, and as contributors and perhaps determiners of the discourse on Indigenous peoples and their life-worlds. An example of sources in this section are the government publications reporting on various studies of "Indigenous territories", the northern Indigenous peoples themselves, and the various aspects of their "life-worlds", including the social, and physical environments. One excellent example is the Ewing Report on the Conditions of Halfbreeds (1934). I lived with the Ewing Report for months during this project and, in

one session, I worked with a group of Metis people for two full days, poring over the transcriptions and reports, drinking in our own past.

The main texts that I have selected record in some way the life-worlds of the Cree, Dene, Beaver, Sekani, Metis, Chipewyan, Dogribs, and DeneTha'. These descriptions and their related analyses point not only to the physical and geographical aspects of Indigenous lives and their worlds, but focus as strongly on the religious or, more accurately, the spiritual aspects of the individual and collective beings or worlds through the inter-relationship of both aspects. I used some parts of the data to springboard research interaction into those topics that are the focus of my work. Some parts offered and were used to assist the research participants in group-sessions to identify, name and articulate what might not have come to the fore in terms of aspects related to Indigenous notions of identity and consciousness. In these cases, I selected specific portions of a text on the basis of my own understanding, theories and experiences in relation to Indigenous notions of identity and consciousness.

I will provide an example to illustrate how the literature served to precipitate that "necessary intuitive leap" in the "cyclic process of scientific thinking" of my own work (Vandervert 1996, p.260). Einstein is interpreted as describing the process whereby "all fundamental or axiomatic new ideas in science (and, we can assume, new axiomatic ideas in psychology) can originate *only* in intuition" (Vandervert 1996, p.260). The process begins with thinking on any subject grounded in "everyday experience"; from this point, a "necessary intuitive leap" is the only way to any new axiomatic or fundamental concepts whose "predictions and logical consequences" must then be tested against experience (Vandervert 1996, p.260).

Einstein was very clear that the connection between everyday experiences and the discovery of knowledge was only made through "the way of intuition, which is helped by a feeling for the order lying behind the appearance, and this Einfuelung is developed by experience" (Einstein 1981: 12 cited in Vandervert 1996, p.260). While he was talking about physicists and the laws of the "world-picture", Einstein did not limit his understanding about how thinking is tied to intuition and life-world experiences. Even to

a non-Einstein, the significance of the "way of intuition" seems easily applicable to fields other than those deemed to be "science".

The following section describes a new "fundamental concept" for ordering the life-world of the Northern bush peoples identified in the focus of this work. This concept also provides a way to envision and perhaps articulate through description the shape and laws that pertain to that life-world in which we as the "bush-people" are immersed. There is much written and oral commentary on the circle as the shape which is representative of the theoretical or philosophical framework which underlies the "Indian" life-world. One of the most succinctly- stated descriptions of the experiential source for the circle's significance came from the recorded words of Black Elk:

> Is not the south the source of life, and does not the flowering stick truly come from there? And does not man advance from there towards the setting sun of his life? Then does he not approach the colder north where the white hairs are? And does he not then arrive, if he lives, at the source of light and understanding, which is the east? Then does he not return to where he began, to his second childhood, there to give back his life, to all life, and his flesh to the earth whence it came? (Black Elk as recorded by Joseph Epes Brown).

The significance of the circle as representative of Aboriginal philosophy and world-view is often referred to and used in those areas of overlap where the "externally" generated and managed social institutions of service and service delivery (e.g. education and health) for Aboriginal populations are in a state of transition to Aboriginal or "internal" forms of management (usually termed self-government) of essentially the same services. The circle is easily configured to explain and demonstrate visually the subtle aspects of Indigenous philosophy which, if once grasped by the non-Indigenous service-provider, would enormously expand and enhance the bases of services themselves as well as their delivery models.

Unfortunately, what usually and logically happens is that the non-Indigenous service-provider assumes that participating in the discourse that places and re-situates the service and its delivery model within the "Indigenous" context of the circle means that the life-worlds of the Indigenous service recipients are now understood and can be accessed and translated into non-Indigenous knowledge systems. From here, it is a quick and easy step

to believe that contextualizing services and service delivery models into the world-view exemplified by the circle is a simple process of using the right words.

A good example is the way in which aspects of health services are contextualized within the Medicine Wheel. The discourse that surrounds this approach to health is often mistakenly attributed to Indigenous people when in reality most, if not all, of the discourse contributors and participants are non-Indigenous. The existence of the language and the discourse, however, is one element of a complex web creating and maintaining the illusion that contemporary political and social pressures to involve Aboriginal peoples in the design, management and delivery of their own services is getting a positive response.

Having said all of this, I grew up within an Indigenous life-world and did not know or sense the reality of the circle. I was old when I first heard about the circle as a model of Indigenous philosophy; I thought it was a beautiful and life-sustaining reality, much more than a symbol. One day, a wonderful Indigenous teacher, Lionel Kinunwa, came into my life for one brief and exhilarating study term. He was a Plains person, a Lakota-speaking Miniconjou as he referred to himself. He described the plains so clearly and, in my memory, the prairies of southern Alberta sprang back into my being. He talked about what it meant to be a Plains person, and the circle slowly came into focus. I could feel the wind in my hair and see the dust devils and the fluffy white clouds miles away in someone else's world. He planted each of us, his listeners, on a knoll in the middle of his Plains world, and, suddenly, there it was, obviously drawn by the clarity and sharpness of the horizon: the circle of the world, the circle of life. That was the first time I understood the source of the circle's meaning and power for the Plains peoples. And, there, in that same moment, I also realized why I had never felt the circle as that structural framework fitting to my world. Within that experience was a great answer for me. However, I still had to find the questions, or perhaps I might say, those pieces that would lead me to the question.

The person whose life-world was embedded in the forests would not see the world as a circle simply because the land was not flat there, and the horizon was not visible from the slight raises in the land. The life-world of my people, the Bush people, could not best be

defined or described within the circle; it had to be defined from the life-world of the bush, the treed wilderness, the forests. The teacher's story was the intuitive leap I needed. It was a great gift.

Some time elapsed and another meaningful piece surfaced as a memory connected to the concept that I felt was being formed. My father was a trapper who, as was usual with many trappers, spent a lot of time in solitude on the trapline. When I had my own son and my father felt it was important for him to learn the trapper's life-world, I also was honoured to be included in those opportunities and experiences. One day after many years of sharing this life with my father, he told us about how he had dreamed of catching a lynx. He described the spot in details of place and space as if these lay before his eyes, as of course, they did. When he went back to check his sets the next day, there he found the lynx exactly as he had seen it in his dream.

In the making of this "memory explicit, of foregrounding it from the archive of implicit recollection and habituated knowledge" (Hastrup, 1995), I used narrative expression to transform "mere experience into *an* experience" (Hastrup, 1995). Hastrup talks about "carving out units of experience and meaning from the continuity of life", saying that we "punctuate" such state of continuity (in time) with memory and narrative. Having then used narrative, even if confined to my own mind and being, to bring this particular memory into the present, I connected the memory to my experience in learning about the circle of the Plains peoples and the significance that my father attributed to the details of the bush in which he was immersed.

By now, I was carrying the seeds of a concept. When I read the stories and texts from Brody (1981) and Helm (1994), for example, and talked to a few friends about the meaning of trails and maps, of sacred spaces, and of how we envision our world as people who are so closely connected to the bush, I knew without a doubt that here was the heart of the work that I wanted to do. I wanted to understand more clearly how the world-view is shaped by generations of our ancestors who lived their lives, in dreaming and in waking, according to theories and philosophies which draw their meanings from forest trails and the significance of their junctures, their symbols, their markings. I wanted to understand and perhaps articulate how it is that our knowledge systems and

ways of acquiring and creating knowledge draw their force and energy from the world of trails and envisioned maps.

I wanted to see a little more clearly how we are still living that life-world of solitude and intense connectedness with the living forces and energies of the forest. I wanted to be part of the creation of some appropriate and respectful means of describing the individual and collective forms of spirituality that have evolved from life experiences of solitude and that absolute stillness of trust and acceptance that permits a fullness and a richness exactly in those spaces and places where others might see only emptiness, starkness and sparsity.

With the Northern peoples and the northern experience is where I rest in my own being, and it is with some of these persons that I have carried out this work. What I saw as my responsibility was to provide the background and the space by means of which persons who might never meet and talk would be invited to gather together and articulate some of the thoughts and feelings which had evolved from their experiences. In other words, I tried to provide a place and a time for us to re-create meanings from our life-worlds, meanings that would help us to see the shape of who we are in identity and consciousness as distinct individuals and as one collective. This was the source for the approach that I adhered to in carrying out this research project.

The inter-relationship of the bush (the forests, the wilderness) and the person(s) is the seat of our consciousness. This inter-relationship is played out in the realm of the spirit, not to be understood as separate from the body or physical world but as the integral and, perhaps even as the determining factor, in the life-world. The life-world is the place where we give expression to the spiritual basis of our existence as human beings. It is through experiences that we discover appropriate ways to live and relate to each other; we find and co-create with others those ways that keep us intact in a space of harmony and balance. The integrity of spirit and body is given visibility and meaning in the expression and embodiment required and afforded through experiences in the life-world.

The body and the spirit are not separate except for the discursive context, and the person lives out experiences in the life-world of perceptions and ascribed meanings exactly because they are not separate. The integrity of the body and the integrity of the spirit are

not associated with separate entities, but they may become so according to the wishes and capacities of the individual, both during and after the participation of the individual in the experiences of his/her life-world. The physicality and the spirituality of the life-world are accepted as easily and unquestioningly as we accept our bodies' relationship with the air. Within that acceptance, the individual being learns to live simultaneously and consciously in both dimensions of the life-world.

In a knowledge system, which, by recent findings, dates back 40 to 100 thousand years ago, there are ways or methods whereby individuals learn to acquire experiences that are specific to one dimension and distinct or impossible in the other. It seems possible, then, that it is the recognition of the empirical nature of experiences in the spiritual dimension of the life-world that permits the development of a knowledge system that differs from that of the Eurocentric system. I prefer the term Eurocentric because it seems to be more accurate than "Western". After all, from what universally accepted geographical point of departure do we begin to assign such forms of directionality? At the same time, I am extremely aware that not all of Europe lives the hegemonic knowledge system of information and technology, which currently manages to hold hostage a large part of the world through economic and military dependency. "Europe" was simply how it came to us; it is an item of discourse and as such I do not use the term Eurocentric to insult or degrade.

Hegemonic claims to knowledge have been schooled into all peoples who have come under the educational influence of Europe-in-North America because of the intentional and sophisticated planning that went into the shrouded system of sanctions and rewards accompanying the dissemination of Eurocentric beliefs and values around language, information, and technology.

The Indigenous knowledge system evolves together with all other aspects of consciousness; it is more than language, information and technology, together or singly. Language is critical for reasons that are a major part of the research project, but in relation to the above commentary, rarely have I observed the Cree language for example, being used as a tool for political, economic or other personal ends.

To complete this section, I will make reference to several other key sources upon which I have relied to a great extent and which I found did not explicitly pertain to any particular organized field of recognized academic study. If I had to attach a label, I would distinguish them as studies in the field of knowledge systems of being, but having done so, who am I to attach a label to anything, and especially to works such as these? Any one of the texts could and, no doubt, has been assigned a category of study, but *I* did not read or study them in those contexts. In my work and in my life, they have represented and continue to represent research into knowledge systems of being. These texts most closely express the ideas and describe the shape of the world which is the foundation of the philosophy and approaches I advocate in research and knowledge creation or seeking.

The texts that I always rely on are *The Secret Of the Golden Flower* (Introduction by Carl Jung), *Black Elk Speaks* (Neihardt, 1978), *Mysticism* (Evelyn Underhill, 1912), *The Cloud of Unknowing* (anonymous) and the *writings of other early Christian mystics and theologians* and, finally and, most significantly, *the words of elders and storytellers* (wherever and however available from spaces all over the planet). The words and meanings that I have gleaned from these texts will be included throughout the body of my work simply because I have integrated them through my own experiences. At times, I am unable to recognize when I am citing someone else's words and when they have become mine by experience. However, when the knowledge cited is still to be learned or fresh in my mind, I cite appropriately.

## CHAPTER FIVE: LOCATING THE RESEARCHER

### Hermeneutics and Phenomenology of Metis Being

***Disputed Territory and Identity***

This chapter will focus on a man who has lived his whole life on disputed territory. He doesn't live his life in a way which overtly recognizes that his physical space is a territory of dispute, but he does know that one day, many years ago, some men came into his community and within three weeks, he and his family were the only ones left. The community had become one family surrounded by empty houses and memories. At that time, the man who lives there still today was a young father with a wife and several children when their community was destroyed. What that space meant then to this man and what it means now are different. However, that difference is as nothing compared to the difference between the meaning of that space in that man's world and the meaning of that space in the world of the government which moved his people out.

This man has never disputed with anyone his right to live on this particular piece of land. The man has never raised his voice in dispute. He has simply gone on living there for the past sixty years.

When I first heard about this community, I felt the spirits move over and around me. I was visiting an older couple in a community about a hundred miles from Wolf Lake. The old man told me the stories that he had been told, helping me to create images and details from an experience, which no Metis would ever want to forget. I was drawn into the story; his narrative, a gift from someone else who had "been there" at that place when "it happened", had been handed on to me. It was a gift whose significance I did not fully appreciate or recognize at the time. All I knew then was that my skin and my body seemed to be responding to things that I couldn't see or understand. I felt the power of that place being carried through the old man's words and I felt from him the energy of the beings who had known that community. I knew this was one of those events in my personal time that would be re-activated in the years to come.

Over the years, the memory of that experience with the story remained in my thoughts and the experience itself was embedded within me as a part of my being. It lay in

stillness, waiting to become active again in my life. It was a waiting for that intersection of time and place where/when the movements of my life would meet and cross with the movements of other people significant to the unfolding of this particular narrative. More importantly, it was a waiting for that power that would be created as my individual spirit/being and consciousness intersected with the spirit/being and consciousness of the people associated with those historical events. This power at the intersection or meeting place of spirit/beings would enable the bringing forth or the creation of something new in the consciousness of those individuals who found themselves present and participant at this significant point. This intersection (or alignment) of space and time would bring into actualization that community of sacred power that had entered my world of vision so many years ago through the gift of story.

Over the years, I had talked to many people who spoke of that place. They, too, had been drawn into the sacredness of that ground through gifts of shared stories. As they shared their memories of their own visions, I felt their own hope and their own waiting and I felt again the heart of the man who had never left that place of power. I experienced within myself the deepening of the story as the years went by. The meaning of the story in my own life was not clear then, nor is it now. However, when the words started to come, they represented a vision of a place where the sacred power of the union between people and land had been forged *after* the desecration and ripping apart of a living community of families, homes and land.

Since that first moment of my own accession into this sacred story, I have met and talked with this man who never left this place. I have talked with his family and with others whose families had also been a part of that community before it was dismantled. I have come to the thought that the power of that community exists exactly because the people in spirit and being still live there. For all of them except this one man, they had continued to live in that place through imagination and memory. Through these means, they had contributed to the vitality and power of that place. They had given and at the same time had received, through a process inscribing a type of symbiotic relationship, the power for living. If that place died, so did they. By telling us the story, the story-tellers had enticed, indeed compelled, many of us to enter into that story space, into that dream. They had ensured that those of us who entered into the story/dream could not let it die.

The story had become us. The place became sacred and powerful because it was who we were, and at the same time, who we wanted to become.

I am here reminded of another place where the people did not dispute with the government when it claimed the land right out from under their feet. They simply kept on living there. Maybe that is the key: there are so many of us who do not dispute, we simply go on living where we are. Then, one day, we decide to go visiting somewhere and when we return, the sacred place of our families and our homeland, our place of power is taken over by strangers; a fence has been built and barriers erected of impenetrable and unrecognizable substance. There is no way of ever returning to the land and place that we hold as our being.

The man who never left was Isadore Cardinal[12] and the community that has become in some ways a "sacred place" is Wolf Lake. I heard about Wolf Lake for the first time about twenty-six years ago. I was in a job which permitted me the wonderful opportunity of wandering around and through the Metis communities of Kikino, Caslan, and Lac La Biche whenever I chose to do so. Through this wandering, I met a lot of Metis people and I began researching the written records of my own heritage and roots in the Lac La Biche Mission area. Going back as far as I could in reading the French and English names, I found my grandparents' names in the Mission records. As I might have predicted, I eventually ran into the block created by the use of Cree names with no obvious connections or directions to guide the transition to the English and/or French names. For the moment, my own specific research topic went on hold, as I followed the newly-opened doorway into the history of the Metis as it had been experienced and held by Metis oral historians of the area.

One day I was visiting an old couple in Kikino. They told me about this place of great beauty, joy and plenty. Then one day in this community, the people had been loaded up into the backs of trucks and wagons and hauled away. They never knew why they had to

---

[12] Isadore Cardinal passed from this land in 1999. His memory lives on in his children and grandchildren, but the land itself that he claimed for so many years is now being earmarked for expansion of the Cold Lake air force base testing area. The evidence of the way of life of the Metis people in that area was kept alive by Isadore and now is in danger of disappearing.

leave their community but every family had gone, except one. The couple telling me the story had never been to Wolf Lake but they had heard about what happened to "those people", their people, Metis people. I felt the pain in their voices, but I also felt the wonder and the awe surrounding the story of this place that they had heard about so many times but had never seen. Obviously, for them, it was a place to remember and an unfinished event/experience for the Metis people. To my understanding, it is an unfinished event for the Metis people in Alberta.

I left that home and, over the next few months and years, travelled to the seven other Metis Settlements in Northern Alberta. At every Settlement, I heard the story of Wolf Lake and at every Settlement, I was drawn further and further into the structure of the story. Eventually, I became fully conscious of the fact that the reality and power of Wolf Lake was now and would in the future be an important part of my life.

**The Socio-Political Identification of Metis**

Several years after my experiences in the Lac La Biche area, I ended up living in Paddle Prairie Metis Settlement where I took membership and land as a formally identified "Metis". With the decision to take membership, there was a definite sense of having acquired a political identity as well as having entered into a social structure that entailed something more than "community". Both of these experiences and concepts were new to me. The politically ascribed boundaries of the Settlement lands seemed to have had a deep impact on the ways that the people defined and described their community and themselves as members of the community. In fact, they did not often use the word "community" in talking about their commonly-shared geographical space. They used the word "Colony" most often, or secondarily the word "Settlement", to describe their home territory. Both of these terms had been introduced by the provincial government in its various designs to address the poverty, illness, and general lack of social services for the Halfbreed population of Alberta. Most of these actions flowed from the various pieces of legislation generally aimed at the "Betterment" of the "Halfbreed"(1930's) or "Metis" (1960"s) population.

Providing a land-base for the Halfbreed population was the primary recommendation going to the provincial government from the Report of the Royal Commission appointed to Investigate the Conditions of the Half-breed Population of Alberta (1936).[13] The plan was based somewhat on a colonizing model used to "help" or "colonize" Indigenous people in Paraguay from the early 1600's to the mid-1700's. The description of the model in Paraguay was included in a document by Lucian Maynard submitted to the Honourable Dr. W.W. Cross, Minister of Health in August, 1937 and entitled "Plan for Settlement of Half-breeds in a Colony" (Appendix A). In this document, the details of an organizational structure for the administration of Metis Colonies were laid out, along with the rationale to support such an overall plan. While the Report of the Commission itself reflected for the most part a humanitarian and egalitarian perspective as the foundation of the Commission's recommendations, the "Plan for Settlement" suggests glaringly that the original intention of the state (whether provincially or federally represented) was never clearly based on egalitarian or humanist motives for the actual "betterment" of conditions for the 'half-breeds', at least not in 'half-breed' terms.

The Commissioners themselves speak clearly to several key points that in their opinion underlay the social conditions that the 'half-breed' population is enduring in Alberta. In relation to these points, they refer to federal policies and practices that had surrounded the granting of scrip to the 'half-breeds'. In so doing, they try to avoid the discussion of "extinguishment of any supposed right which the half-breed had to special consideration" Report, p.3) and state that the Province is faced with, not with "legal and contractual rights" (p.3) that were the basis for the issuance of scrip "but with an actual condition of privation, penury and suffering" (p.3). Their recommendations for action are based on the principle that the "right to live cannot be extinguished" (Report, p.3).

---

[13] The Commission of Albert Freeman Ewing, Judge of the Supreme Court of Alberta, Edward Ainslie Braithwaite, Doctor of Medicine, and James McCrie Douglas, Gentleman was appointed on December 12, 1934 by George the Fifth, "by and with the advice of" W.L. Walsh, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta.

Their comments on the nature of the 'half-breed' are a second key point to support their recommendations "for Governmental assistance and guidance" Report, p.3).[14]

They interpret the scrip issue as revealing that "the great majority of halfbreeds have not the so-called 'land-hunger' (Report, p.3) and that in fact they are not interested in owning land or settling down permanently. This, along with the fact that "the readiness with which the half-breed succumbed to the wiles and persuasions of the speculators in parting with the scrip indicates his lack of business foresight", as well as his way of living in general so close to nature as his ancestors did, shows that the 'half-breed' must "either change his mode of life to conform with that of the white inhabitants or he must gradually disappear" (p.4). The conclusive point to their argument for government assistance for the 'half-breed' is:

> The leaders of the Metis Association very frankly based the claim of the Metis to special consideration on the admitted fact that the half-breed is constitutionally unable to compete with the white man in the race of modern life. (Report, p.4)

The *Plan for Settlement of Half-breeds in a Colony* "sets out the details for the carrying out of the proposal outlined by the Royal Commission" (Plan, p. 4), a proposal that "some form of farm colonies is the most effective, and, ultimately, the cheapest method of dealing with the problem" (Report, p.10). In the Plan, the foundation to the "problem" is ascribed to the psychological make-up of the 'half-breed'. The success of the proposal by the Royal Commission is presented as dependent on the "man in charge" (Plan, p.4).

> In order to be successful, however, it is absolutely imperative that the man in charge be most familiar with the nature and disposition of the half-breed, for the problem is just as much psychological as economic. (Plan, p.4)

To my observations and interpretations, this statement is the foundational belief that has been and continues to be reflected in most if not all government policies and practices towards Metis people, and indeed, towards any Indigenous peoples. The Plan laid out clearly the theories behind the design and implementation strategies that it detailed. In

---

[14] Note the use of capitalization in this Report: "Governmental" is capitalized but "half-breed" is not. For an excellent discussion re: such usage and its import on identity as well as its association with power, see Paul Chartrand's article on *Outside Naming*.

this manner it described some crucial underlying beliefs in the minds of non-Indigenous decision-makers and therefore it explained many of the otherwise unreasonable policies, and irrational practices that have characterized "White" Government in relation to Indigenous populations, including Metis or Halfbreeds. While the elucidation of this relationship between belief and practice in the White structures that govern and impact so strongly on Indigenous realities is not directly the focus of this work, I am hoping that this piece of relatively recent history in terms of Metis identity and Metis reality will provide a "real", however unattractive, context for the rest of this work.

The psychological aspect of the Plan presents the half-breeds that were to be developed under this land scheme as a group of human beings with inherent limitations to normal development and maturation.

> Although they will not admit the fact, they could be assimilated to certain grown up boys. Their minds teeming with impossible desires, restless, able to furnish a long serious effort, they are incapable of keeping up to a long arduous toil. The white boy will mature in course of time, but the half-breed will not. He will remain a good big child with the qualities and deficiencies of that age. (Plan, p.5)

The belief that Metis people were retarded developmentally in comparison to white people was promoted and used by the government to validate the governance and administrative structures of the "Metis colonies". In those administrative structures implemented with the establishment of the first Colonies, the position of general "superintendent" (a position recommended in both Report and Plan) typified the belief in the limited capacity of 'half-breeds' to govern and manage their own affairs. How the government of Alberta forgot the demonstration of Metis capacity in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and throughout the whole history of Canada as a nation in formation is a perfect example of selective memory on its part. Or perhaps the stronger point that might be made is that they did not forget.

The colony supervisor as he was identified up to the late 1970's was in control of all aspects of management of the "colony", including policing and judgment. The supervisor distributed jobs and benefits and meted out judgment as he saw fit. The Metis people who lived on these "Colonies" since their establishment in the 1930's and 40's remembered how the Supervisor was the school teacher as well as the decision-maker in

charge of dispensing family allowances, land allotments, and the granting or refusals of leaves of absences according to his own rulings.

When I entered a Metis colony for the first time in 1974, the supervisor was still the man-in-charge. I didn't pay too much attention then to the way that business was conducted on the 'colony', probably because I didn't actually live there. What I did notice was that in the late 1980's and early 1990's, the government attitudes, policies, and practices towards the Metis people were so demeaning and disrespectful that it was nearly impossible to believe what I was actually hearing and experiencing. The experiences of a Metis coalition that actively opposed the process and the content of the Alberta Government-Metis Settlements Accord of 1990 were well-documented and are well-remembered as evidence that the beliefs being promoted in 1937 as the foundational principles for the establishment of the 'half-breed' colonies were still guiding the policies and legislation with respect to Metis people. The popularity of such a belief amongst "white" Albertans and Canadians in the late 1930's has not been documented as far as I am aware, but also as far as I am aware, that type of research tends to be discouraged simply by virtue of its subject matter and its incongruity with Christian ideals and Canadian public policy. In the year, 2000, however, a book was published by the wife of a colony supervisor and this book confirms every statement of belief about the "psychological aspects" of the 'half-breeds' as cited in the *Plan for Settlement of Half-breeds in a Colony* (1937).

While a review of the public responses to the Government's actions in setting up the Metis 'colonies' is not a focus in this project, such a work would certainly offer a meaningful contribution to my thinking. I think it would be safe to suggest that in 1937, the general public of white Alberta did not know about, nor did they want to have to deal with, the problems of 'halfbreeds'. The government plan that promised by its design to keep the 'half-breed' people confined to their own boundaries provided an easy solution to what seemed like a potentially on-going and complex issue.

The governments of Alberta and Canada knew the complexity of the issues around Halfbreeds and the potential impact of their Aboriginal claims and/or thus far undefined rights. Such awareness is demonstrated in the pages that make up the Report to the

Ewing Commission (1934). There was little doubt that the intent of the province was to openly set up structures that would colonize, mentally as well as physically, a people who had challenged "their" nation fifty years earlier. The genocidal effects that had been endured by the Metis people for the duration of those fifty years could not be condoned for too much longer as the results of the Ewing Commission had shown. The Metis had become wanderers in their own homelands, unsheltered and unprotected, facing continual starvation and illness because they were prevented from building their own homes or growing or gathering their own foods and medicines. Even a bird that flies needs a piece of earth to rest and live. The Metis diaspora was never referred to as the scattering of a people, and yet in the experience of the Metis people of the Western plains of Canada, it was that: the scattering of one people for the political expediency and material advancement of another people.

The results of purposeful and politically-motivated actions orchestrated by the Canadian government after 1885 was to destroy any visible form of Metis social identity and ensure that the settlement of the West continued unimpeded by Halfbreed claims to land, civil rights and protection. Such intentions and actions against the Aboriginal peoples who had been involved in the armed resistance of 1885 have been historically documented and demonstrate such a degree of duplicity, savagery and brutality that even today while educators espouse the importance of accuracy and reliability of information, the facts of such a history are usually not made available to students. If they are, such facts are presented under the pretense of liberal thought, and are offered up within the context of a "diversity of perspectives" or under the guise of scholarship descrying "revisionism" of history.

The 1934 Ewing Commission report portrayed the effects of a national policy from the 1800's that aimed through repressive measures enforced on the Western plains by the NWMP to contain the Indian "problem" to the reservations and scatter the landless Halfbreeds to the western and the northern territories (Francis,1992, p.68, Dickason, 1992, p.310-315). The Commission essentially described the personal and social devastation of a people, but it neglected to point out that these same people had played a primary role in the shaping of the Western prairies into the provinces of a new nation,

and it did not suggest as I am doing that these same people would not likely be "forgiven" for their "uprising" against the Canadian government of the day.

Even in the 1930's, the perspective that the Metis in the late 1860's and 1870's were fighting for their family homes and properties was not considered or recognized. The images attributed to them remained as those images had been created and perpetuated since the1880's - the inferior wild forces to be overcome and tamed by the civilization represented by the settlers who replaced them on their lands. Over half a century after the organized movement of Metis resistance to the government of Canada, Ewing's report indicated that by now there were supporters of the Metis people amongst those who held positions of power and influence. Further, by now, the voices of the Metis people themselves were beginning to gain strength and all levels of Canadian government recognized that something had to be done. Despite indications of serious racist bigotry and ethnocentrism in the documents surrounding the proposals for change, the information and the recommendations from the Ewing Commission prompted the province of Alberta to legislate the establishment of Metis colonies under a scheme of land allocations for the collective use of Metis people.

The attitudes and beliefs of the Alberta government and its managers have been reflected in legislation and policies and in the events and processes that have ensued over the years as the Metis Colonies became Metis Settlements. Under the most recent provincial legislation in 1990, slowly and almost imperceptibly the Settlements were moved into a "limited form of self-government" (Dickason, p.364) that in reality has created more of a relationship of dependency under the provincial government than ever existed before, partially because of the culturally and socially inappropriate structure/design of the new system of administration and partly because the years of repression under foreign and imposed systems of government and social administration have undermined the Metis systems of social organization and consequently, resulted in a loss of and/or a devaluing of the Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies which have formed the basis of Metis identity.

*Legislation Affecting Metis in Alberta*

The significance of the various pieces of legislation in Alberta (Metis Population Betterment Acts, various versions since 1938) aimed specifically at Metis people has never been analysed from a Metis perspective. It remains unquestionable, however, from any perspective that the legislation had and continues to have tremendous impact on the economical, political, social and personal realities of Metis life and identity. Because no other province in Canada has addressed the situation of Metis people in such a material fashion, Alberta has claimed international recognition for its generous treatment of the Metis people. The "gift" of 539,446 hectares of land to the Alberta Metis through the Metis Population Betterment Act of 1938, "at the time the most advanced legislation in Canada relating to the Metis" (Dickason, 1992, p.363), was intended on the surface to address the poverty and homelessness of the Metis.

What is not recognized or perhaps ignored is that the Alberta government also ensured through the same legislation and other pieces of legislation and amendments that followed over the years that the Metis people could not or would not establish their own forms of government and social organization. In other words, the legislation that "gives" land is also the legislation that takes away the opportunity for the people to be who they are. The ultimate test for the "advanced" legislation and for any of the legislation that followed must be based on Metis individual and collective vitality and well-being.

In the 1930's, the opportunity for Metis people to move from the "road allowance" to the "colonies" was not readily grabbed up. Reluctance to break with family ties and communities to move into new and unfamiliar territories, as well as the ongoing distrust of government "gifts" and promises no doubt contributed to this situation. This thinking is based on conversations held with Metis individuals whose families did choose to relocate to Settlements and with Metis persons who hadn't even heard of the Settlements until well into the 1970's. Even today, there are probably thousands of Metis who have no knowledge that such "Metis reserves" exist. Having been a part of a Metis family who lived in poverty and eked out an existence on four acres of land, I know that my parents did not even consider the idea of relocating themselves simply because there was land set aside somewhere or "reserved" somewhere for Metis people. The notion of land being

held as a collective did not spring naturally to Metis, contrary to that suggestion from the Report of the Ewing Commission. The notion of the dominance of the *collective* in the psyche of the individual Aboriginal was never visible to me in the lives of the Metis, nor for that matter, to any great extent in the lives of the Northern Cree. Yet that abstract notion seems to have pervaded government strategies and solutions to the "Indian and Halfbreed problem" for centuries.

The Halfbreed Settlements and the Indian reservations were designed for non-Indigenous notions of collectivities, not for individuals. Perhaps it is reasonable then that the reality and existence of individual Metis and Cree seems never to have been a point of consideration by the government in the negotiation processes for land and other forms of Aboriginal claims/rights. In the negotiation process, the collectives were forced to choose their spokespersons according to the "democratic" processes dictated by federal and provincial policies on Aboriginal "collectivities". This process was and is usually not compatible with Indigenous forms of social and personal organization, especially as it has evolved, nor was it consistent with the Indigenous ways of expressing personal and social ethics and values. However, the significance of such discrepancies, although pointed out by Indigenous peoples to those external dictators of systems, were ignored, downplayed, or re-phrased. Negotiations were a game of dialectics where the government and the spokespersons (on both sides of the negotiating table) used a shared vocabulary that was almost exclusively determined and controlled by the government and the media. This shared vocabulary was based on stereotypical images of "Aboriginals" and evolved through a constellation of symbiotic relationships between government and media that simultaneously served to convince the uninformed Aboriginal members of the specifically created political collective and to appeal to the general (non-Aboriginal) public as articulate, reasonable, and generous.

In the late 1970's, my membership at Paddle Prairie Metis Settlement provided on-site experiences with legislation and its impact on Metis identity and all aspects of Metis life. It also provided connections with history from the mouths and through the voices of many more of those persons who had lived the Halfbreed and Metis experience themselves or who had relived the history through the lives and memories of their ancestors. The narrative of Isadore Cardinal at Wolf Lake presents a story of Metis

identity and strength that was sometimes disbelieved and held to be myth in its power to capture the imagination and impassion lives. There are other narratives and images as powerful and impassioned, giving purpose and inspiration. We hear the stories and we watch the lives and we see the power moving, stretching and folding back onto itself, revealing patterns which we are not supposed to be able to see: the continuous iterative dynamics of the fractal cascade of Metis existence.

The Metis poet Adrian Hope expressed his Metis identity through verse. His writing was well known and he was very well respected for the many years that he had committed to the struggle to improve the living conditions of Metis people. Adrian Hope lived his life in poverty by anyone's standards. I met Adrian Hope when I was living in Caslan, a hamlet near the Metis Settlement then known as Caslan colony (also Kikino and later Buffalo Lake). I had been invited there by the school principal to help in the implementation of a special project intended to "equalize" schooling opportunities for the "disadvantaged" Metis students. I wanted to establish a network of educational support for myself in the work I was involved in, and more importantly, I wanted to increase my understanding of Metis history and Metis Settlements since this was my first association with the concept of a Metis 'collective'. I was excited and intrigued by the idea of a Metis collective. Besides, I had been told that Adrian Hope was a poet and I loved people who lived poetry.

My first visit is indelibly burned into my being. I was looking forward to meeting this Metis guide for my personal journey. The long, windy and hilly dirt backroads were beautifully edged with the flaming colours of autumn, and the leaves danced and spun crazily across the road in front of me. The sound of the wind drowned the motor, and I felt a deep sadness beginning to creep into my excitement and exhilaration. On that first visit, Adrian Hope was a man out of a book, a character too sophisticated and glamorous for me to recognize. He had all of Metis being rolled into a manageable package; he was happy and he laughed as he talked, turning history into tales of exotic and fantastic persons and events. He was exactly the type of a teacher I needed at that moment in my life.

In my inner life, I was coming from a place where Aboriginal people lived in squalor and need. I had grappled with a terrible personal anger at the people who maintained the "white" systems and governments, at what I perceived to be injustice and the deceitful manipulation of peoples who lived outside the English-language culture and who seemingly had no means at their disposal to ever protect themselves against such actions. I had been involved with children, men and women who struggled to deal or not deal with abuses of all forms and degrees. Even death had become an unreasonable event, the anger eating itself up to hopelessness while the crisply suited and inappropriately sympathetic morticians wheeled away the dead who now disappeared into an unfriendly earth. I wanted the earth to spew the rotten flesh back out in disgust on the faces of those who put them there. But I had begun to realize that it wasn't going to happen - the earth welcomed the dead and they were gone. All that remained was the poetry that had been their lives, recorded in the memories of those who lived on.

Adrian Hope remained a friend, teaching me many things about the Metis movement through his own cherished oral renderings of history. His personal identity remained his own, invisibly weaving in and out of the lines of dialogue. He showed me an old shed that was filled with boxes of papers and a few books. This was the record of his struggles for the Metis people of Alberta, silent and unrecognized testimony to the hours of unpaid labour and personal commitment to an unpredictable conclusion. After a government raid on Metis Colony/Settlement offices to confiscate files that were potentially significant to the Federation vs. Government of Alberta litigation, these kinds of 'records' and 'filing systems' became important sources of information. They were the primary archives of the interaction between the government and the Metis people since their first steps in organizing themselves and beginning anew the old struggle for land and home. Individual drawers, bags, boxes, and sometimes sheds full of papers signified the degree and sometimes the type of involvement that each person had had with the government, this being the primary if not the only source of legitimate 'contact'. Not surprising that the Metis people often referred to the government workers/bureaucrats of all agencies as "paper people".

Arthur and Evelyn Pruden opened their home to me. We sat with in their kitchen and talked about their experiences as Metis people. Evelyn had been born and raised on an

Indian reserve. Her mother was a Treaty Indian and her father was 'white'. Arthur had spent some time on a reserve, some in a mission, and some on a homestead. His mother was a Treaty Indian and his father was a Halfbreed. Arthur was a cowboy, making a living on the rodeo circuit and working as a hired hand for local farmers.

In 1939, Arthur helped to move his father and mother, with all their machinery and livestock, off the 'Indian' reserve to the newly opened colony of Kikino. His parents had been under increasing pressure by the Federal government to move out of the reserve, and the Metis colony offered new hope and opportunity for them to prosper. When Arthur and Evelyn married, they moved their family onto the Kikino colony/Settlement where they still live. Because Arthur and Evelyn have lived their whole lives in ways that support their identities as self-sufficient and self-determining members of a Metis people, they have passed on that pride and that identity to their own children.

More importantly perhaps, for other Metis persons, like me, they have included us with that warm and powerful welcome into the circle of their lives. By being there, they have gifted us with the living knowledge of being Metis and living a Metis life within the physical boundaries of a politically contrived collectivity. The richness and strength that they contributed with the sharing of their lives continues to provide new generations with direction and hope, with laughter and unbelievable power to take the hardships that often characterizes much of daily life and recreate the joy and vitality of Metis life.

The written history of Metis people often emphasizes the time of the resistance in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (1869-1885). According to Metis historian Olive Dickason, the controversy continues into today over the "roles of the government and the Metis in the confrontation" (1992, p.313), with one focus being the intent of the government to provoke the uprising. Dickason's summative remarks of this situation place Thomas Flanagan on one side and Doug Sprague on the other: "Thomas Flanagan maintains that 'Metis grievances were at least partly of their own making: that the government was on the verge of resolving them when the Rebellion broke out' " and "Doug Sprague ...that the uprising 'was not the result of some tragic misunderstanding, but of the government's manipulation of the Manitoba Metis since 1869' for reasons of political expediency"

(1992, p. 314). In the end, except for those whose lives are partitioned so as to live part-time in a world contrived of theory, it doesn't really matter who wins the debate.

The outcomes of theoretical debates don't make changes to the experiences of the Metis who lived through the 1865-1885 era or to the experiences of the Metis who are living through this one. In the end, what matters is that the Metis people themselves remember the stories that they were told by their ancestors who were present or who heard the stories from those who were present at those historical events. The dynamic stretching and folding of Metis history as it was lived by Metis people must become a part of the consciousness of the Metis people of today. These memories enable the critical analysis and interpretation of contemporary events from an awareness of the iterative nature of reality as it stretches and folds back on itself through time, presenting opportunities for the creation and shaping of unexpected and unpredictable conclusions.

However, academic or any other debate around the Metis and Indian stand at Batoche has absolutely nothing to do with the "field reality" of being Metis or Indian, either then as the stories have told us, or in the present (Nordstom and Martin, 1993). Eva Ladouceur shared a story with me about her grandfather and grandmother who were present and directly affected by the battle of Batoche. Her grandfather had watched as his young wife and infant son, along with a young French girl who lived with them, raced on horses for the river, the woman shielding the baby in her arms, a desperate attempt to save the life of her child. The soldiers were firing a steady hail of bullets on the women and horses. The Metis men did their best to cover this rush for safety and the women made it across the river, bullets cutting the air and knifing through the water all around them. What Eva carries from the story that was passed on to her are the images of bullets raining on the women and baby like hail, bullets that very likely came from Howard's beloved Gatling gun.

The Gatling gun was brought into Batoche by "their demonstrator, their master and their lover, Lieutenant Arthur J. Howard of New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A" after he heard that "Canada was going to try it out against the rebellious Metis" (Howard, 1994, p.451/2). The public outcry against the use of the Gatling gun in this situation led the Colt manufacturer, Howard's military connection (the Connecticut National Guard), and

the US government to withdraw any association with Howard and his involvement in support of the Canadian offensive against the Metis and Indian peoples gathered at Batoch to defend their homes. Looking for opportunities to "test the beloved gun on human flesh and bone", Howard travelled over twenty-five hundred miles to effect what was likely the decisive factor in this battle for the Western plains. To Joseph Kinsey Howard, writing in 1952 of his ancestor, Lieutenant Howard in 1890 was simply being scientific.

"His interest in the mass murder of Metis was wholly scientific, cold as a mercury in a tube. Batoche was to be his laboratory. ... It had been used a few times against American Indians. But that was about all, and now it had been improved" (Howard, 1994, p. 452).

In the end, Lieutenant Howard proved the effectiveness of the Gatling gun as an instrument of destruction. Recognition from the Canadian field troops, officers, and reporters praised "Howard and his Gatling gun" in popular writings of the day (ibid, p. 453/454), attributing the 'victory' over an army of vastly outnumbered, poorly-armed and starving Metis to the power of such a weapon and its "friend".

The Metis resistance and rebellion in Canada is rarely, if ever, discussed without reference to the individual actions and personality of Louis Riel. The actions and contributions of other individuals to the resistance movement or struggles of the Metis people in Canada are often ignored or downplayed. There is little doubt that historically it has served some political advantage in more than one situation to subsume Metis identity generally into the simultaneously "insane" and "rebellious" Metis identity prototype that has been created and promoted by means of the name of Louis Riel. In most of what might be termed "Canadian" history (that which is reflected in public school curriculum, for instance) the story of Louis Riel and the Rebellion when it is mentioned often serves as the only noteworthy historical comment on the Metis people in Canada. This story deserves to be told and re-told, giving honour according to the memories of the Metis people who know the stories as they were handed down from those who lived through the times and events of 1885.

In more recently developed and revised school programs and curricula, the Metis Settlements of Alberta have been receiving attention. This is not surprising. The Alberta

Government-Metis Settlements Accord of 1990 has been promoted by the federal and the provincial governments as an exemplary approach to the resolution of Metis issues in Canada and even to some extent as a method of dealing with Indigenous land rights and resources claims in general. This view of course has not been supported unanimously nor even widely by the Metis people themselves. The implications of such legislation on Metis and Indian identities is a major topic of contemporary debate and concern in Indigenous communities; it involves the shaping and defining of political identities and as such is one that is not likely to be easily or quickly resolved. Many Metis persons are open to sharing their personal experiences of participation in the process leading to the adoption and eventual implementation of this "modern" piece of legislation. They spoke of the process in ways that demonstrated that the Canadian state has continued from the 1800's to hold similar attitudes and to employ strategies in their dealings with the Metis people that aim for similar ends.

The discernment of this repeated folding and unfolding of rapacious intent does not come easily if Metis history is limited to superficial interpretation of those documents written seemingly from within state bureaucracies. Discernment is especially difficult where, by the very nature and tone of their writing, the authors assert a disinterested and scholarly objectivity. During the years of the most direct and overt forms of Metis resistance and defense, mid-1860's to late 1880's, there was little (or nothing) written by the Metis themselves as a record of their own perspectives of the events of that era. However, as is becoming more obvious and significant with the increasing numbers of Indigenous scholars and a more critical awareness amongst social science scholars in general, that is not to preclude the fact that from the available written texts that promoted the English orientation of a colonial government, it is possible to 'hear' the Metis voices. It has always been possible to hear the voices, but now scholars from *within* the cultural membership have begun to decipher the words and to present written interpretations of their meanings, to elucidate and bring to renewed life the Metis presence embedded and implied in the many texts so obviously written with intentions of obliterating such presence.

In the "field reality" approach to research and analysis, it is the objects or subjects themselves who must interpret and describe the experience - give words to the energy of

the movement and events that are impacting and shaping their identities, and spaces (Nordstrom and Martin, 1993). Understanding the Metis side of the Batoch story does not require any degree of knowledge associated with the identities of the soldiers or their perspectives on the use of the Gatling guns. However, the story of Eva Ladouceur and her family reflects a significant piece of Metis history and as such contributes to the identity formation of Eva Ladouceur herself as a Metis woman, her children as Metis persons and the Metis people who look to her as respected Metis elder and historian.

To people growing up with this image of Metis history, there is something that sickens the spirit to know that the Canadian government, the Army, the priests and the settlers actually planned and supported the use of the Gatling guns to kill Indigenous - Cree and Metis - women and babies in order to 'clear' the way to coveted land and resources. The sickness within the Metis people must deepen with the knowledge that the politically accepted version of the history of that event is recounted even today in classrooms across the nation without shame or apology by the descendants of those settlers, government officials, and those officers and soldiers. There has been no state declaration or formal recognition of this shame and dishonour that lies at the foundation of Euro-Canadian identity in the western plains. It makes sense then that there exists also no recognition that this hidden shame is the seat of the perhaps unconscious hatred and resentment that drives the settler society, the state and its 'officers' of today to continue the genocidal practices from which they hope will eventually come forgetfulness and peace of mind.

For those who find themselves reacting to such discourse as "too far off" the beaten academic track, I refer you to the words of Lionel Kinunwa, one of our great Indigenous teachers. Dr. Kinunwa taught us that cellular memory is the essence of continuity of the human life. We carry within ourselves the knowledge of our ancestors and our most important task is to make such knowledge conscious and available to ourselves and then to participate in the creation and contribution of our own present knowledge as it springs from our connections with this cellular memory. We contribute our own knowledge to the world we are born into, but we come with cellular memory giving us the capacity to know and understand beyond the limitations traditionally imposed by time and space. It is the fulfillment of this capacity that has taught us the necessity and wisdom of respecting all forms of life equally, avoiding a focus solely on the human form of life.

If we apply this notion of cellular memory to the people who wanted the Metis and Indians of the western plains to disappear from the face of the earth, then it becomes obvious why the resentment and oppressive practices linger on. The oppressors (repressors?) have not yet permitted themselves the opportunities to develop to the point of being "fully human", as Freire might have said (1983). They have chosen to live as if their lives can be separated from the lives of their ancestors. In this manner, the "rational minds" can continue to deny the human need to forgive those acts of shame perpetrated by the ancestors of centuries ago. Indigenous teachings inform us and lived experiences bear out the truth: cellular memories cannot be erased or intellectualized out of existence by theories of denial, rationalization, or logic.

The destructive nature of contemporary 'settler' society including individuals and institutions supported by their governments and military agencies continue to operate in much the same fashion as they did in 1885. Persistent attempts are maintained to eradicate or 'control' the Indigenous peoples and ways of life, ignoring the fact, or not understanding, that such efforts merely reflect with more certainty how it is that the 'settlers' destroy themselves. A rejection of personal and individual experiences as a part of centuries of cellular memories has resulted in a concomitant rejection of personal experience of self as an individual *being* in a state of interconnectedness within one world unlimited by concepts of time and space. Such individuals have chosen instead to lodge themselves or their individual identities within the limitations of an imagined and theoretical space and moment, identifying themselves wholly as this thought embedded in this theoretically-constructed intersection of time and space.

In what they proudly label as the "rational" way of dealing with the world, they refuse to see themselves as 'beings', or even as 'thinkers' or 'thinking beings'. They are engaged with life in a way that does not distinguish between that which is engaged in the action of knowing or thinking and that which is known or 'thought'. In simple straightforward terms, the separation between the agent of thought and the content of thought is merged to such a point that there is no evidence of a state of consciousness such as we would commonly recognize. The agent then may be described as unconsciousness. Following this line of reasoning as it has often been applied to 'savages' and 'primitives' in the 'pre-contact' period, the settler mentality then is exemplified as one of savagery, a brutish

mind, unconscious and unable to distinguish between itself as agent of thought separate from the thought itself.

True, the bullets or projectiles fly faster and farther today, but the concept of the "hundred-horse carriage" of Ouspensky remains in effect. The evidence of our advancement as human *beings* does not rest in technological developments like the Gatling gun. The most technologically complex turbo-jet airplane flies on the same principles as the most simple single-engine plane, or so a pilot told me; only the superficial aspects vary such as the lavish or plain interiors serving executives and princes or trappers and their dogs. The ability to kill quickly and in great numbers may provide the power to control the records of history, and in the same manner to even determine to a great extent the events of history. However, such power cannot prepare individuals or enable them to live with the long-term effects of those events. The events may be erased or re-written in the historical records many times, but as personal and collective experiences of human beings, they cannot be erased from cellular memories. It is only through the *being* that individuals and collectives of humanity develop the capacity to live with the terrible meanings and the aftermath of such events as was signified by the fighting at Batoche in 1885.

*Being and Thinking*

What does this distinction between *being* and *thinking* have to do with Metis identity and Batoche? I want to turn briefly to a discussion that may sound dangerously like the old and stereotypical dichotomy of "Aboriginal spirituality" versus "Western science", or "Indian creativity versus White reason". While such stereotypes should have no place in scholarship at any time or place, it would be foolish to assume that such stereotypes are nonexistent in the setting of an academic institution. That such stereotypes continue to flourish in the public spheres of most institutions is a fairly accurate indicator that they are being passed on, consciously or unconsciously, at most levels of post-secondary professional training and education.

I refer to the stereotypes because it is necessary, I believe, to state directly that the words I will use in this discussion may suggest a similar stereotypical dichotomy, but in meaning, there is no connection at all between the stereotype as a "popular" form of

knowledge and the *being* and *thinking* to which I refer in my discussion. In addition to providing some groundwork, I am also hoping that this section will clarify the significance of the distinction I am highlighting between *being* and *thinking* in relation to the identities of descendants of those peoples who were participants in the conflict at Batoche.

For a person to reject any form of guidance coming from a conscious sense of *being* in favour of a strict reliance on what is purported to be "objective reasoning" is to deny that humans are first and foremost *beings*. To reject the *being* element of human is self-deception maintained through the power of the intellect, where such a practice develops in the first place. To live a spiral created and sustained in the head, within the individual intellect, means that relationships with the world of *beings* external to the self are in fact impossible. Human relationships require conscious *beings*; thinking is a part of any relationship but it does not form the core of the relationship. Thinking cannot be the source of the core energy driving an interaction or an interconnection in a relationship. When individual decision and action attempt to equate or replace personal *being* with personal *thinking* within the context of relationship, then there is in fact no relationship. There is merely an exchange of words and thinking. Therein lies the key to understanding the plethora of issues and conflicts that characterize the multiple varieties and situations of cross-cultural communication. Systems and theories designed to address such disabilities in communication skills tend to focus on one side or the other of the miscommunication equation. What is rejected, buried, or ignored is that the human communication dyad in order to be operative requires both *thinking* and *being* as elements of consciousness.

Issues and impediments to 'successful' cross-cultural dialogue are often depicted in relation to languages, pause time, and other cultural factors around gender or age, for example. These impediments can be easily described, addressed, and resolved with intelligence, knowledge, skills, and time. At a superficial level of analysis, the determining factor of success becomes the willingness to invest personal time and effort to resolve such impediments. This is the level at which educational bureaucracies will usually maintain ongoing discourses and discussions: "talking about" knowledge and skills elements (teacher training, language teaching and learning, curriculum, programs,

funding, multiculturalism, theories and practices of all of these, etc). Educational administrators in these kinds of systems are guaranteed many years of service because they do not disturb the status quo in their ways of dealing with their responsibilities. They adhere to the theory that educational administration is not about *being*. In their work (primarily talking and thinking), they rarely if ever allude to the impact of "personal will" on successful cross-cultural communication, whether between parents and teachers, teachers and students, or administrators and any other. To recognize human will as a factor in educational programs and schooling success of any learner would be to recognize that, in educational decision-making, *being* is as important, if not more important, than *thinking*. In the social systems of Canadian society in general, the denial of personal will as an active element in decision-making is commonly used as an attempt to deny the political nature of those systems. This is true also of public and no doubt private education systems.

Although the role and impact of politics on education is shrouded under 'acceptable' and 'liberal' legislation and public policy which exhorts the highest of ideals of personhood and *being*, administrators and educators in general continue to implement such policies in total denial of the *being* of parents and students, especially the *beings* of Indigenous parents and students. The significance of cellular memory in the consciousness of Indigenous peoples brings forward in sharp relief the source of the conflicts that Indigenous peoples often experience when confronted with the Euro-Canadian approach to life that gives primacy to *thinking* over *being*. This is not to suggest a dichotomy between Indigenous and Euro-Canadian views because this has not been evidenced in any way.

An Indigenous group would more likely reflect a view that all aspects of the human enter equally into the being of the person. In this view, thinking is only one aspect of being; the being encompasses the thinking process. The significance of this indissoluble connection between *being* and *thinking* is never denied; one cannot think without being and the impact of individual *being* on thinking is factored into all thinking processes in a conscious manner. Even a rudimentary discussion such as this one is sufficient to point out that the denial or recognition of 'different viewpoints' in many cases is only intellectual positioning. It is 'liberal, scientific and open-minded' to accept different

'viewpoints' so no one argues against that. However, the heart of this discussion has not been on "different viewpoints". If it were, there would be very little point in pursuing the argument. The heart of the matter here is that it is exactly this intellectual positioning that serves as the ultimate denial of the impact or role of *being* on *thinking*. Those who deny the active presence of *being* in their thoughts, decisions and actions can maintain their position because in the end, this discourse on *being* and *thinking* by its very nature is an intellectual exercise and represents positioning of the intellect.

The one point that remains to be said in this brief but related digression is that the linkages across time and space of the beings of Indigenous individuals and collectivities suggests the import and effects of educational approaches that deny the *being*s of persons. When *being* is denied and *being-in-relationship* is not perceived or experienced as a characteristic of human existence, the forms and quality of interconnections that are possible with other persons and beings are deeply affected. The person or the society that falls into this mode of self-deception about the non-existence of *being* as an active presence in life can unquestioningly spend a lifetime trying to reason the angle of the hurled stone axe, merely to develop ever increasingly complex forms of technology to control the projection of that stone axe and multiply its forces of destruction exponentially. The chosen measure of such an individual and society becomes "How effectively can I kill and at what rate?" There was no evidence of respect for Metis and Indian life from the government and the settlers and the military in 1885 and there isn't much more today. This seems to be compelling evidence of the effects of cellular memory at work, even without the development of an in-depth psychological argument. Metis, Indians and Settlers remember and do as their ancestors did; some with consciousness of *being*, others without.

*Colony Metis*

When I first heard the terms "colony", I was a little surprised that the Metis people used it so easily and seemingly without any negative connotations. All of the people that I had gotten to know were long-time residents of the Settlements. The term "colony" had been the original designation and it had taken on its own local meaning - a home territory under the direction of a Colony Supervisor/Administrator who was in turn supervised by

a provincial government bureaucrat at a middle-management level of the hierarchy. In my mind, I kept remembering the word 'colony' from anthropology; it connoted domination and subjugation. I tried that definition out on a few people and most of them enjoyed the new meaning, thinking it apt for their situation. A few persons, however, did not appreciate the suggestion that they were being dominated by anyone.

I was a newcomer to the Settlements, having been introduced to the concept in the early 70's. I did notice that it was possible to live a fairly self-sufficient lifestyle and that there were many families who did so, living in a manner that seemed independent from the affairs, decisions and actions coming out from the colony office or from the over-seeing Edmonton offices. In the late 70's, as a new member of the Settlement, however, I did not notice until much later that many of the local situations and events were precipitated by political events as they were interpreted and described by people in Edmonton offices 800 miles away. I was relatively uninformed of the connections between my life locally and the Minister's decisions in Edmonton. This abruptly changed when the news reached the members that the provincial government sent its agents on unannounced raids of the Colony offices and files. I remember the shock sweeping through the Settlement and the sense of gathering together to understand what this action meant to us as individuals and as a community. This was the beginning of my knowledge of contemporary Metis history. Its basis was the assault position being taken by the Alberta government in response to the litigation being initiated by the Federation of Metis Settlements.

Since those early years, I have learned from front-line involvement how events at the macro-political and social levels will impact and shape the micro or local social and political events, affecting and to some extent determining how Metis people identify themselves. In the case of Alberta, at least, and certainly to a large extent in other provinces as well, Metis people have had to assume a variety of superficial identities (Chartrand, 1991). These were often 'names' that described relationships that had been created and imposed to serve the administrative and political aims of two levels of government. Obviously, the fact that these identities are superficial and are taken on for political or economic reasons cannot totally eliminate the impact that such naming will have on the normal psychological processes associated with individuation and self-

identification, those processes that have to do with development as cultural and conscious beings.

As contemporary Metis, and like many others, we have been in that unenviable position of having to live through this experience of being 'named', without really knowing in advance the impact of this on our psyches. Unlike other people, we are in a position where we are being named not only by "outsiders", but in some ways also by the very people from whom we are descended, and from whom we ought to and do find the shape of our identities and our beings. In other words, we are also being named by those people who are our ancestors, and who cannot in all meanings accurately be termed "outsiders". As members of another people, however, they are not exactly "insiders" either. This is not to deny or downplay the fact that, in a discourse of *being*, the Metis people would not exist except for the presence of "outsiders".

The distinctiveness of the *being* that evolves with the merging of two peoples as occurred in the birthing of the Halfbreed or Metis people in North America destroys the consistency of the dichotomy implied in the notion of "outside" and "inside" naming. Although such a dichotomy can be useful for framing a discussion of the political and social naming practices that have affected the positive development of the Mets people both as individuals and as collective through out their history, it tends to shroud one of the most significant factors at work in the formation of Metis identity. This is the naming that accompanies the normal development of a child: the naming by the parent, accepted as an "insider". Identity formation processes would demand of Metis people that they confront the deep personal impact of the knowledge that a parent may be an "outsider" simply by virtue of the fact that s/he cannot be an "insider". The Metis child belongs to a different people than the "European" father or the "Indian" mother, and yet that child cannot escape the truth that father or mother will exercise the practice of naming the child, and as such, the naming will play a significant and inescapable part in the shaping or determining of the individual Metis identity of that child. As Metis persons, we know first hand that these naming practices impact our personal sense of who we are and at the same time effect and to some extent determine the ways in which we choose to give expression to that personal sense of being. At the same time, we learn through the years of development from childhood to adulthood the limited capabilities of our parents to

prepare us for the social and, although less so, the political identities that arise from what is obvious "outside" naming and accompanies being Metis in this country today.

What is unusual in the situation of growing up Metis or 'Metis identity formation' is that an opportunity lies hidden in this situation of coercion. Here, in order to know their ancestors, a critical element of being Indigenous, Metis are forced to confront consciously those impacts that have kept identities and *being* tied to "outside" naming. The source of this need to confront outside naming as having special significance to Metis identity formation lies within the bonds that exist naturally between parents and children. Further, Metis people recognize and value the active presence of all ancestors in every individual being. It follows then that an "outside" parent, i.e. a "European" father or an "Indian" mother, will represent an impact that has kept identity tied to an "outside naming process" and at the same time will represent a core element of defining ancestral presence in the being of the individual.

Because the presence of the ancestors is implied and embedded in Indigenous identity formation, all past generations remain significant to contemporary individual Metis identity. The essential and particular place that parents will hold in Metis identity formation becomes clear when applied to parents who are not Metis; the "European" influence and the "Indian" influence are both 'outside' Metis being and simultaneously 'inside' Metis being. Yet both parents form a part of the child's Metis *being*. How that *being* is expressed is the identity of that being. That identity is a reflection of the integration of those elements that had once shaped his/her ancestors in two different and separated lands and that have now come together to shape a being who had never before lived on this land.

Metis identity represents an integration that is denied implicitly by outside naming (e.g. Halfbreed) and within much of the literature where Metis are presented primarily as the joining of two peoples, and rarely as a people unto themselves. More recent work such as that by Jennifer Brown and Jacqueline Peterson attempts to portray the Metis as a new people, but even then the work tends to contextualize its content within the allusions to a history of two peoples. It should be no surprise then that public acceptance of Metis as individual beings with integrated and whole identities belonging to one Indigenous

people is limited and that derision towards the notion or claim of a distinct and separate Metis identity and sense of being ranges from the scholarly and subtle allusion to "schizophrenia" to the antagonistic label of "mongrel" with discussions of "hybridity" somewhere in the middle.

As Indigenous people connected to Indigenous languages as well as European languages, Metis people have been taught that words have great powers to shape and affect all life. Words are used to name, describe, or identify the individual self and are critical to the manner in which individuals are able to give expression to *being*. Associations or personal acceptance of self and individual identity as synonymous with identities assigned through political or social "naming" destroys the power inherent to self and identity as created within the dynamics of the individual ego and consciousness interface.

To identify the self with an assigned "name" is to deny and relegate individual *being* to the definition and control of the intellect of the one who names. In this case, the Metis *being* is subsumed to an identity that has been defined into existence by naming and theory. The evidence and expression of Metis *being* may or may not be a visible element in this identity, but whether or not it is, remains an issue of import primarily, if not only, to Metis people themselves. It is Metis people alone who can fully know and understand the impact of this process and system of undermining Metis identity.

*Being Metis In the Isolated Communities - Other Metis and Other Lands*

Metis identity has infused the life of North America since the late 1600's. Jacqueline Brown points to 'the heart of the North American fur-trade arena....(where) a new society came into being. .... a society whose members ... were a people in the process of becoming" (Peterson in Peterson and Brown, 1985). Peterson concludes the paragraph by saying: "We know this because their distinctiveness was fully apparent to outsiders, if not to themselves" (Peterson, 1985). Whether or not their own distinctiveness was apparent to them is of course a particularly relevant point to any discussion of Metis people's identity. Whether or not such distinctiveness was apparent to the Metis would also be knowledge limited to the particular Metis person or persons referred to directly. Outsiders can attempt to decipher from a variety of "original sources" the degree of Metis self-awareness that existed during particularly selected periods of history, but these

"original sources" were usually not Metis "original sources". From this perspective then, it might be useful to point out that much of that which is viewed as" original sources" for knowledge about Metis people, Metis society and even Metis history (from a Metis perspective) are essentially secondary sources.

A researcher/writer especially noted in the social sciences who seeks out the journals and esoteric personal notes of European travelers in the 'virgin wilderness' of a 'colony' as reliable sources of information and knowledge on the people and the times in question cannot accurately claim that such materials are "primary sources" for all the subjects referred to therein.

Aside from the fact that early journalists were not necessarily experts on the topics they chose to write about in their journals, there is a need to be continuously mindful that the original writers wrote in a manner that reflected their own personal situation set within a particular stage of the development of their own society and their own nation. This point of course is the easier one to be cognizant of and is commonly and explicitly noted in academic writings. What is often not explicitly noted is that the writer/researcher who uses these "primary sources" is also by nature of being human speaking from a similar context: a particular stage of individual and personal development set within a particular stage of the development of a collective society and/or nation.

Somewhere or somehow the reader or consumer is unconscious of or is assisted in or led into forgetting that the creative process in effect for the development of this "new" knowledge involved an iterative process of folding and unfolding meanings of which s/he is an integral part. Because s/e is an integral part of these unfolding meanings, whether consciously or unconsciously, those meanings that evolve become identified with the self (to the degree that the individual is aware of self or conscious of self) and are associated with or held to be synonymous with the sense of the value that is held of oneself. The meanings thus are given the power over the self or being of that person and the situation is created where s/he has given up the capacity to interpret, understand or accept the meanings in any other context except that one in which s/he was immersed when the meanings unfolded. This person cannot discern the position that s/he is in.

The inability of the individual to separate self from meaning leads to an inability to perceive the potential for the construction and/or the existence of differing perspectives on the same meaning. This inability effectively paralyses the capacity of the person to shift personal perspective to a higher point or a closer position on the "objectivity " spectrum. This inability to break the self-created and self-imposed bonds of consciousness imprisoned by meanings that are partially at least also self-created prevents the individual from entering into relationship and dialogue with another person or being except at a very superficial level, and often only in situations of shared meanings and/or shared perspectives on meanings. The quality of the relationships and the sophistication of the dialogues within any society are the basis of the vitality and endurance of that society.

Relationships and dialogue require particular characteristics of consciousness that are not necessarily demanded by Western notions of scholarship. Contemporary scholars can logically and theoretically gauge the soundness of their research according to its placement on an implied spectrum of objectivity (science of some measurable type is supposedly still somewhere at the peak) and the calibre of their work is still being judged by colleagues and society members on the basis of that often self-described position on that imagined spectrum. The value of scholarship has generally, and certainly in the Western-American tradition, been associated with the level or degree of public response and acceptance. In this system, the type of scholarship that gets rewarded and recognized generally is that which serves a social and political function and meets the contemporary political and social aspirations of the various levels of state. An imagined "scientific" objectivity continues to be an active societal element guiding the creation of new knowledge and meanings.

Western schooling processes are intended for the long-term and public schooling has not really caught up with the advances made decades ago in physics. Besides, only a select few students ever take physics – it is not needed for most employment situations, and schooling is primarily for employment in this country. Hence the continued focus and subtle coercion towards an inculcation and acceptance of an imaginary state or quality of "scientific" objectivity to guide and thence to measure all "research". A scholarly reference to a work as being based on "primary " as opposed to "secondary" sources is

merely an attempt to convey the notion that a particular piece of work is closer to the "original state of reality" and therefore somehow closer to the "truth" as" scientific" objectivity.

This necessary and explicit situating of persons, and in some cases of peoples, provides a logical foundation for a broader and more in-depth discussion of the many issues and complexities related to representation (Marcus and Fischer, Goulet), objectivity (Varella, Braken) or ethnocentrism/ethnocentric bias (Larocque) in social science research. For a succinct discussion on the import of this latter point in relation to "original sources", see LaRocque in *Orders of the Dreamed: George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823* by Jennifer S.H. Brown and Robert Brightman. While inappropriate representation of Metis and other Indigenous peoples continues to be a major issue springing from and characterizing much social science research, this would be a minor concern if it were not also true that such research continues to guide the development and implementation of state policies and legislation and also to very large degree to determine through powerful social institutional practices the quality of relationships that exist between Indigenous peoples and the "others" in Canada.

This quality of relationship is of course at the heart of the quality of life that Indigenous peoples sustain. As such, a cursory and therefore inevitably superficial skimming over the surface of "appropriate and inappropriate representation" as a research focus would simply contribute to and strengthen the widespread and widely promoted belief that this is merely an intellectual and theoretical discussion, a battle of words, a discourse with no substantive correlates of any significance. In various fields of scholarship, discourses will continue on issues of representation, including the effects of research that is embedded in one reality but purports to interpret another and different reality. The discourse is comprised of words, but the words have the power to unveil the implicit and often carefully camouflaged claims to scientific objectivity especially as observed in social science research. It is exactly within these scholarly denied-but-socially accepted claims to "scientific" objectivity where lies the source of the power to influence policies and practices within Canadian society. It is exactly within the challenges of the discourse that the questionable and inherently contradictory nature of the source of that power to influence is unveiled and revealed. While this work will not directly participate in that

deconstructive discourse of theoretical representation, it is intended to serve as a contribution to that body of work that ties discourse to lived reality and individual being

In some ways, an intellectual discourse about Metis identity might be expected to make at least moderate reference to the works of Louis Hartz (The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia, 1964), Jennifer Brown (Company Men and Native Families: Fur trade Social and Domestic Relations in Canada's Old Northwest 1976, Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country, 1980, The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America, 1984/5 edited with Jacqueline Peterson, The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, edited with Eccles and Heldmann,1991), Jacqueline Peterson (The New Peoples,1984/5), and our own made-in-Alberta John Elgin Foster whose contribution to scholarship about Metis is honoured in a volume of essays From Rupert's Land to Canada edited by Binnema, Ens, and Macleod, 2001. Other writers whose works also might be cited as pertinent to a dissertation related to Metis identity include George Stanley, Douglas Sprague and Ronald Frye, Marcel Giraud, and Joseph Kinsey Howard. All of these works in general take a perspective that grounds Metis identity in economics: the focus whether stated or unstated is the fur trade and its significance in Canadian history. A review of the literature relating to academic discourse on Metis people flows from this context of the fur trade. The effect then is that Metis people have not been presented with any characterization that lies outside the parameters established by the fur trade discourse.

In this work, I am speaking from personally lived Metis experience. I am speaking of *being* and *living* in a contemporary Indigenous world. My personal experiences span several decades of history but at this point of the work, I have tried to focus briefly on a period of time when I was living as a member of an "isolated" community in northern Alberta. The world that I was immersed in very closely resembled that one described as the context for the interpretations and representations that were made by many of the scholars listed above. .The resemblances were not only in various aspects of the physical and social environment but were also reflected in the personal interactions and

relationships between the white Canadians and the Indigenous Cree and Metis people of the area.

In 1981, I was a member of a team of workers put together to advise and gather resources to support a protest march being carried out by the Cree people of the Bigstone Cree Nation. I was an invited and unpaid "consultant", a distinction that to me remains very important. I was young and fairly naïve, but I had worked with the chief on other community projects over a period of several years during which I had lived in several tiny, and "isolated" communities. Living in those communities had given me a concrete sense of my own identity and how I fit into the total pattern of kinship and events that were tied to and shaped those communities historically. My own childhood along with my mother's teachings had prepared me to understand and to actively acknowledge all of my relations and the values that supported a strong extended Indigenous family system.

Those people who marched were Cree people, otherwise known as "Indians" according to all legal and formal Canadian definitions. I am Metis, but they are my people: many of them were my cousins, my aunts and uncles, my nieces and nephews. The people walked 250 miles from their homes in Wabasca-Desmarais to the DIAND offices in Edmonton, Alberta. Metis and Cree walked together as persons, and as one people. They did not make distinctions between themselves as being of two different and distinct "peoples". In this context, there was no need to differentiate between themselves as two distinct "peoples". This march was to protest the desperate social conditions under which the members of Bigstone Band had had to live and had hoped to survive. It doesn't matter much to what political definition you ascribe for a political identity when your babies are hungry; you call yourself whatever name the Canadian government gives you and demands that you use in order for them to "hear".

The people who marched then were not activists, radicals, or warriors in the "Western" stereotypical sense of the word. They were not events in the newspapers nor the enemies of Canada. They were old people and young people with blisters on their feet and aching bodies and hearts. They laughed a lot and cried some. They sang and told stories to keep up morale and a good spirit and reminded themselves of who they were and where they

came from. They were babies, children, youth, men and women, walking together and being together. Identity was clear.

After it was over, I went home, lost and bewildered, struggling to find hope, desperate to find the desire to go on. I had learned a lot and I never forgot what I learned. I have hope but it doesn't rest with an outside body. When the march had reached its logical conclusion and was almost over, and I was listening to the final dialogue in Ottawa with the highest officials who would meet with the chief and his council, I knew that hope for the lives and well-being of our children and of all of our peoples, the Indigenous peoples in Canada, would never find its source in a place outside of that which we ourselves could create, maintain, and defend.

I would always remember because the events and the people had been burned into my being. I would never forget the image of suffering as the Chief prayed before the meeting, tears falling and Government officials waiting for him to finish whatever he was saying in Cree. After the walk was over, I wrote in my journal:

> *The people have gone home. And they have left a trail where they walked – a trail which stretches all the way to our Nation's capital.*
>
> *I wonder if they know that. I wonder f they know how the wind has stirred, and moves with their breath, and reaches everyone who has an ear to hear.*
>
> *I heard over and over again the prayer that was torn from a man's heart. Torn, because he'd held on to his pain for so long that it came unwillingly, yet of necessity. He had chosen to walk, and the trip has only begun. Where are those who must walk with him? Where are those who felt the pain in that prayer as it poured out?*
>
> *When, I asked myself, with unbearable shame for my ancestry and its people, does one man have to ask God for the freedom and the necessities for his children? Why does he have to ask that the heart of the men on our government be softened that they might listen? Why does that flag fly free over every capital, etc. of this country when the original people are not free? When they must pray for what the rest of us take for granted? Why does he have to pray? My whole being was*

*bared in shame and anger at what we all have allowed to happen. I listened with shame for the men who answered those people, promising to do what they could. Is there no end to the degradation to which these officials will sink?*

*What are we? We surely cannot be human beings in their eyes, else their own shame would render them speechless before such facts, such pain, such need.*

*We must begin a new movement without them. We must begin a new movement where they will have no place, for they walk with no knowledge of their own shame, or even of their own spirit. We must cease to talk with them, for they are incapable of communication of that which is true and of themselves.*

*We must begin our own organizations without money, or useless words. We must base them on the spirit within and without us, but of which we are constantly aware. We must begin to rise without the aid of those who are themselves unreal, who are shadow people that we have allowed to deceive us.*

*We are fighting, it seems, to have entry into this shadow world. It is true that we should have the choice of entering it or not. But should we train our children as they do that this shadow world is the Real world, that it is the only world?*

*We must be aware of how we fight, and of what we might win. We do not want to win the access to this shadow world and in so doing to lose our spirit, and thereby our only guide. It is only through this spirit that we as a people have remained apart, and only through this spirit that we will continue to survive.*

Identity in those moments of anguish was not an issue to take into the courts or into the political arena for some sort of external resolution. Identity was clear and unshakeable, formed and carried through the blood of generations of ancestors. For the Metis people, that ancestry included European and Indigenous peoples. Metis people did not perceive their identity as springing from a "weakened" Cree ancestry or a "weakened" French or English ancestry. That notion arose from the colonialist theories that placed Indigenous identity in the realm of zoology, where, like animals, a whole people were individually identified in relation to blood quantum, i.e. "halfbreed" and "quarterbreed".

Such references linking blood quantum with individual or group identity have been shamed out of most academic discourse and therefore out of most "acceptable" public discourse. The notions of "breeding" people and of valuing the "white" portion over the "Indian" portion of the identity are displayed blatantly in most examples of "historical" writings and more subtly in contemporary writings about Indigenous peoples. The opposite case of valuing the "Indian" portion over the "White" portion of identity is much less evident, occurring primarily where and when the state has intervened with legislated conditions and parameters that carefully circumscribe legal or formally determined identities such as those reflected in the several versions of the provincial Metis Betterment Acts, 1938 to 1989 or the well-known and widely-debated federal Bill C-31.

"Indian" and "Metis" have become terms that Indigenous people can no longer use without careful consideration of the inherent legal implications of such usage, especially in Alberta. The labels of "Metis" and "Indian" carry limitations and advantages within distinct and formally state-structured societies such as "Indian reserves" and "Metis Settlements". Membership within such social political groupings that have been formed by foreign legislation has become a contentious and thus far unresolved issue.

Where individuals and communities allow themselves to fall into the mire that has been created by such legislation, the people themselves end up struggling for a personal and collective sense of identity and meaning in a world no longer recognizable by the old names and the old descriptors. Under the guise of "self-government" and "self-determination" processes, Indigenous identities and ways of being are swept aside and replaced by non-Indigenous systems of administration that by their design enable and permit the flow of dollars from the state into pre-determined and pre-named Indigenous hands. Indigenous acceptance of the system itself is a condition of the flow of dollars, and there are few external indicators to show that the majority of the affected Indigenous population recognize the abuse of colonial power in the coercive foundation that underlies most, if not all, formal Indigenous –State agreements. Such "self-government" agreements, once "negotiated" between "equals", form the structural base for "neocolonial" systems of self-government implementation, systems that are designed to ensure as far as possible that power will continue to rest with the state, to be "given" out according to the political agenda of the state.

Whether or not the Indigenous contemporary world of political and social affairs can accurately be termed "neocolonialism" is a question that deserves scrutiny. It becomes simplistic to perceive only that "brown" people have replaced "white" people within Indigenous bureaucracies. This view does not in fact recognize that the people themselves almost without exception are very aware and not surprised that the system itself continues basically as it always has. Even to describe how the 'new' systems of self-government have benefited some and robbed others does not fully and accurately portray how the genocidal and almost inhuman forces of destruction have been and continue to be perpetrated upon the Indigenous peoples of this continent.

There is a need to understand how the forces of colonialism and neocolonialism are at work within the Indigenous worlds, but the efforts to achieve such understanding must be contextualized within a state of Indigenous reality: a state of Indigenous identity reflecting Indigenous epistemology within Indigenous ontology. Without this context, academic analyses of Indigenous realities will easily fit into the parameters of existing theories of colonialism and neo-colonialism. The danger then follows that the focus for solutions is sought within the literature of post-colonialism with its emphasis on deconstruction and destructuring. Strictly from a theoretical perspective, a deconstruction approach to the evolution of positive responses to social issues and concerns is not easily compatible with the tendency of Indigenous peoples to seek solutions using an approach of synthesis.

In synthesis, the solutions will spring naturally from the issue or concern itself; it is from within the issue/concern that an answer is sought. This is not the same as saying that the issue must be 'taken apart' in order to find an answer; it is saying that the issue itself is to be accepted as an integral part of the solution. This goes back to the 'answer first, then question' pairing. It is obvious and indisputable that Indigenous identity formation processes *are* heavily impacted by theories and practices associated with colonialism and neo-colonialism. Critical analyses of the negative impacts on identity formation processes for Indigenous persons might readily be pursued using the language of 'colonization' or 'modernity'. In such an analytical frame, identity formation might be presented as a process moving along a spectrum of events which impact on identity, but

within this particular frame, these events would be described as forces external to the identity itself.

I am suggesting through this work an alternative way to centre or frame this analysis. I have tried to maintain focus on the individual Indigenous identity itself as it displays and defines itself, in relationship to other self-defining identities. There is no reality in theories; and I am averse to situating this discussion in a theoretical frame or structure that cannot accommodate all the aspects that I have accepted to be 'true' based on my own and others experiences and relevant to the whole. Essentially, I have realized through this work that consideration of identity formation and its attendant issues must precede or be factored into any critical analysis of Indigenous realities.[15]

[15] This still, small voice inside my head keeps saying, "Ah, yes, but then, that is the Northern experience." The implication is that perhaps this inevitable return to focus on individual experience (in this case, expanded to include 'identity formation') as the measure of "reality " or "personal truth" is not valid elsewhere. The response comes swiftly from the ancient Western traditions of spirituality: Evelyn Underhill saying "the ultimate test of truth/good is the personal experience that flows from it".

## CHAPTER SIX: INTERGENERATIONALITY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TO INDIGENOUS IDENTITY

### Ceremonies That Maintain Intergenerational Connections

The concept of intergenerationality serves as the thread that binds together the multiple aspects of this thesis on Indigenous identity formation and consciousness. Intergenerationality is the quality that best describes the patterns of Indigenous identity, woven by unseen hands from threads that have no beginning and no ending, a flow of life infusing life from an unquenchable source.

There were many beginnings to this research project; the following experience describes one. During a prayer sweat, I saw this old lady walking beside a long line of Indigenous people. The line looked endless, and indeed there was a sense of no beginning and no end. The people were tired, many of them carrying loads, walking slowly, heads and bodies bent slightly. The impression was one of a long journey that was ongoing; again there was no sense of having had a beginning or of having an end. The sense of tiredness and "burden" or "suffering" was strong, but the sense of acceptance and endurance was even stronger. The old lady walked beside the people. She was the only figure clothed in color, with long, white hair. I was told, "This is you and your people of many generations. As the generations have passed, she (the lady) has always been there with you, and she will always be there with you, walking beside you." To realize that this Grandmother had always been there with us was a tremendously moving and life-affirming moment for me. If I had to give shape to the concept of intergenerationality (usually recognized as an adjective, not as a noun), it would be in the image of this woman, the Grandmother figure who walks, filled with love, beside us on this long and difficult trail travelled by so many generations.

There are many ceremonies whereby Indigenous Cree and Metis people give expression to an individual and collective awareness and sense of respect for the ongoing presence of those who have passed on to the other side. This is not to imply that all Cree and Metis individuals participate in such or any ceremonies. However, it is not to imply either that, because many or perhaps even most, contemporary Cree and Metis individuals do not participate in such ceremonies, they do not carry within themselves and give expression

to this awareness and respect for the ongoing presence of their ancestors in their own lives. I believe that they do, and this belief is based on two things. One, I am old enough to have "interviewed" hundreds of Indigenous persons, and I have yet to talk to one individual who does not recognize and give credence to the notion of the active presence of the ancestors in his/her life. Two, the active principle of cellular memory (tribal memory/blood memory/tribal consciousness/collective consciousness) as it is evidenced in daily living inures the presence of the ancestors as a point of reference for present reality.

The more well-known and recognized ceremonies that move the individual directly into a state of connection with the ancestors are the various types of sweats, formal fasting, the 'burning offering', and the 'dance of the ancestors'. Intergenerationality is a dynamic of holism, not an abstraction. It is a descriptor of relationships. (carl urion/conversation: July 30th/02). In the term, I find myself imaging a constellation, a set of shooting stars, fireworks, fractals , explosions of fractals – I understand the notion of power or energy being created within the experience of the fast or the sweat.

During the sweat, connections are made with the grandfathers and the grandmothers as well as with other beings of the spirit realm. Health and a balanced sense of being of both individual and collective as well as increased knowledge and a deeper sense of the spiritual are outcomes of communication and connection with the ancestors through this means. While this may sound like common Western approaches to religion, where the individual goes to church for a sense of personal or familial well-being and social acceptance or so that God won't turn away "His" face, the Indigenous individual is not likely to "go to" a sweat with such a clear objective in mind. S/He is more likely to "enter into" a sweat as a means of shifting from one world of experience to another.

The sweat is an event occurring where and when a number of "things"(some of familiar substance, others not) are brought together and come together both to create and to provide an opportunity for deeply personal and individual experiences of connection with aspects and/or beings of the spiritual realm. There is never a predictable outcome offered by the host; the only implied promise to a participant is that a personal and spiritual connection will take its own form, it may be noticed or not noticed, it may be understood

or not understood, and it may be accepted or ignored in its significance to the individual's daily life. The elements of Western religions that once served the same purposes to their adherents as the sweat does to many Indigenous people are not lost and, to a few, are not forgotten, but they have been buried beneath layers of church institutional bureaucracy. This bureaucracy has robbed the individual of the opportunity to experience his/her own sense of self as spirit, the most crucial and elemental experience to human *being*.

The different forms of fasting similarly move the individual from one state of being to another. Again, the movement is a shift from one world of experience to another or others. Persons who are experienced and knowledgeable about this type of learning and being will act as guides and helpers to those who are in the beginning stages of this particular road of self-discovery. Fasting as an activity takes many forms, usually according to the teachings of the guide (whether spiritually or physically present), and almost always involving isolation, silence, and physical deprivation of some sort. As an event, fasting also brings together a number of discrete elements into one moment and space, creating an opportunity for the individual to experience self as spiritual being in direct connection or communion with other spirit beings and simultaneously as active participant in the creation of power and life energy.

The burning offering and the dance of the ancestors are two ceremonies during which the ancestors are specifically invited to be present, and the ceremonies themselves are particularly intended to honour the presence of the ancestors at the ceremonies. The "burning offering" or *matchustehekiwin* invites the ancestors to eat and participate in a celebration or auspicious occasion. The *matchustehekiwin* is an integral part of the second ceremony, the *wihkohtowin* or "dance of the ancestors". I will expand commentary on this particular ceremony because it is the one that most clearly for me encompasses the many aspects of Indigenous being as I have experienced it. The *wihkohtowin* becomes the text by means of which the studies of northern Cree ontology and epistemology could most accurately be entered into and remain unchallenged as timeless knowledge with contemporary meaning and application.

The *wihkohtowin* is a spiritual event that ensures the continuity of a particular relationship between the people and the ancestors. The event is very important in the

development of both personal and social identity. As such, it ensures the well being and vitality of both the individual and the collective.

**The Wihkohtowin in the Context of Historical Trauma and Healing**

The *Wihkohtowin* or *dance of the ancestors* takes place in the spring and in the fall and is an occasion of gathering together the family clan and/or the community. Fires are lighted, arranged both outside and inside a lodge that has been especially constructed for this event. A bundle is opened, signaling a bringing into the present of persons and events that remain a part of the historical reality represented by the contents of the bundle and/or the bundle itself. The person who opens the bundle and basically 'hosts' the *wihkohtowin* holds the responsibility to take care of the bundle for the collective involved. The bundle is a living entity for which the 'host' on behalf of the people has responsibility to protect and authority to address at the same time that it protects and addresses. Through the event, the family becomes a part of or enjoined to that historical reality by being present and participating actively in the event. The context of prayer and sacred actions formulate an invitation to the grandfathers and grandmothers, to the ancestor spirits, to come and be present and to join in the celebrations of dancing, drumming, and feasting.

This event is a celebration of great import in the formation of identity as individual and member of collective. The primary element is the hosting of the ceremony to welcome again into the collective the spirits of those who have gone ahead to the other side, inviting them to into enter into communion through the ceremony with all the people of the present time and space. Through this event, the living members of the community participate fully in the welcoming and the communion. The event is a bringing into consciousness for the people who are still on this "side"[16] the knowledge and understanding, based on their personal experiences acquired during the event, that those who are in the spirit world are present with us and are an integral part of who we are and who we will be.

---

[16] The words "this side" and "other side" indicate the framing of life and death as being two sides of a veil, so that "this side" refers to life in the ordinary sense of time, space, and physicality.

The event teaches us and brings to our awareness that this is a part of our identities and beings as Cree and Metis people. It brings into present reality the unseen sources as well as the visible connections we have with the rest of the family/clan or the community, including present and ancestral physical and non-physical beings.[17] We experience ourselves through the talking, the dancing, the drumming, and the feasting as a physical expression of the collectivity as it exists across time and space. Through our own participation in the activities, we individually experience the integrity of this collectivity and simultaneously become conscious of ourselves as the bearers of this integrity.

The *wihkohtowin* ensures the integrity and continuance of Cree and Metis/Cree consciousness as it is given expression in Northern Alberta. The consciousness of Northern Cree and Metis people of Alberta finds expression in the *wihkohtowin*, an event that ensures the integrity of both individual and collective. This assurance rests upon the highly sophisticated structuring of individual experiences carried through powerful renderings of intense oral expression: singing and dancing of prayers carried by the hypnotic and rhythmic heartbeat exemplified by the drumming. These oral expressions provide the individual impetus for sharing in the dancing and the feasting, a sharing that becomes the individual and personal expression of commitment to membership within and of communion with the collectivity. To actively participate in the *wihkohtowin* is to effectively become immersed in and a part of the living history of the people as collective. This is an experience where "the psyche....knows by a kind of empathetic identification of knower and known, in which the object of knowledge and the total being of the knower enter into a kind of fusion," (Ong, 1977, p. 18). It is an experience of primary orality.

It could be argued convincingly that, in the *wihkohtowin*, the bundle and its contents can serve and best be understood as a text, as a part of the "written" history of the people.

---

[17] It is interesting to note that in English language usage, we can say "non-physical" without hesitation, as if to divide the world of objects and beings into categories of "Physical and Non-physical" were so clearly rational as to be beyond intellectual challenge. Yet, we hesitate to use the categories of "physical and spiritual" because somehow that is less scholarly and scientific, and therefore more open to intellectual criticism. Further, we rarely say "spiritual and non-spiritual" to denote categories of objects or beings.

This position is in no way incompatible with my perspective that the bundle serves as the repository of living power, and that the ceremonial sharing of the "stories" (peoples' lives) connected to the bundle and its contents is a sharing of that power with all the people present. The words of the bundle holder are an expression of the power of the bundle and its contents. The people share in this expression because without a listener, a receiver, the power of the word is empty. The power of the bundle simply *is*, but the people lose the strengthening effects of its presence amongst them without the traditional hosting of the *wihkohtowin*. They also lose the power of their identity as collectivity when they cannot or do not immerse themselves in the physical experience of this event. The *wihkohtowin* is shaped by a concept of shared memories that is given form by those who are present. At the same time the vitality of these shared memories springs from the communion with the ancestors and it is this force that upholds and gives life to the dancers and all those present.

**The Power of Words and Language in Shaping Identity and Consciousness**

This brief discussion of the *wihkohtowin* has been useful for framing the elements and bases of the distinction that separates this work from the general theories of identity formation.[18] It is not my intent that this work be categorized as one of the many 'theories of identity formation'. I do not claim a sophisticated knowledge of this highly complex area of research. However, I do understand that a discourse framed within an Indigenous context on identity formation within an Indigenous context is distinct from a discourse framed within a 'Western' social science context on identity formation within an Indigenous context. It is also distinct from a discourse within an Indigenous context on 'Western' theories and notions of identity formation.

The degree of specificity demanded in relation to word choices and word usage in order to attain a comprehensible – in my own judgement - level of clarity and accuracy in articulation of thought associated with this discourse is almost incomprehensible. My

[18]The "individuation process" of Carl Jung comes the closest in meanings and descriptions to the theoretical bases represented by this work on identity formation from an Indigenous context. Jung's elaboration of the concepts of synchronicity, archetypes, and the collective unconscious are particularly significant and deserve critical analysis

mind is at times incapable of holding the construct together for analysis. The underlying struggle perhaps is that the discourse within an Indigenous context cannot best be conducted through logical and theoretical argument. It rather needs to be experienced as a revelation and/or a process of discernment of meaning that lies embedded within the multiple layers of the discourse itself, including this complete text with the ceremonies it describes.[19] In this work, I struggle for both revelation and discernment: to be, discern, and describe in metaphor, and to develop and present an academic thesis addressing Indigenous identity formation with logic and a theoretically sound argument.

Intergenerationality is simultaneously a primary quality and an accurate descriptor of the source of vitality for identity formation amongst Northern Alberta Cree and Metis. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, the quality of intergenerationality is best noted in events identified as "ceremonies" and sometimes as "rituals". I have purposefully avoided a discussion on the many and varied definitions that have been given to these terms within the social science literature, especially that associated with Indigenous peoples and their ways of being. I have made this decision to avoid these definitions, not because I think they are wrong, but because the derivative arguments in support of these definitions connote uncomfortable linkages between the "scientist" and the "microbe" under scrutiny.

In the world of the northern Cree and Metis, I have heard the English word "ceremony" and the Cree word for "ceremony" used often. However, both words are almost always used in the context of conversation between a person who is an English language speaker wanting information and a person who is a Cree language speaker and can only generalise the answer. This situation arises primarily because of limited Cree language and English language vocabulary on the part of each speaker respectively. In Cree language usage, all ceremonies have specific names; there are no words to suggest a "general" category of ceremony. In Cree, the word closest to the general categorization implied by the English term "ceremony" becomes *isihcikewin(a)* or , literally "a making "

[19]The challenge of course is to create for the readers a comprehensible cultural experience with words of shared meanings. The context in this case is one where the writer and the readers may be of separate and distinct cultures, and although the words are of one language and suggest shared meanings, in fact, they hold different meanings that have derived from distinct lived experiences.

or "makings". If the word is "ceremonial", then the term is *kihci isihcikewin*, a term that carries within it the association of sacredness or godliness or spirituality, literally, a "great making".

In a Cree-English dictionary, the English meanings of "ceremony" and "ceremonial" that are ascribed to the Cree words are probably the best interpretations given the choice of words available in the English language. In such a dictionary, where the Cree words are written in Roman orthography and have been written for the benefit of English-language speakers, meaning is simplified and reflective of the "literate" society. The meaning of the Cree word *isihcekewin* carries the emphasis on "the making", a verb acting as a noun, and not on the person who did "the making". This is not the same meaning as held by the English word "ceremony" where the emphasis is on the event itself, a completed something, an object and separate whole unto itself. There is no indication in the English-language word "ceremony" of any association with a person who might have "made" it happen. This commentary is to help clarify for the ensuing discussion that "ceremonies" and "rituals" as English words used by both Cree and English speakers do not necessarily reflect a situation of shared meanings.

This difficulty in accurate interpretation of Cree words that express Cree reality is probably a partial explanation for the claim of so many Cree elders that Cree cannot or has not been translated properly. Or as on occasion, they will caution against the interpretation of certain elements of Cree practices and teachings, especially those of a spiritual nature. Although the categorization of events such as that denoted in the word "ceremony" is common and deemed necessary for efficiency of communication in English language usage, such categorization of events tends not to happen in the same way in Cree language usage.

An example with reference to "ceremony" is that this term is always linked inseparably in its Cree equivalent term to the spiritual aspects of life, each event having its own history and being accorded its own specific name and forms of respect. When Cree speakers use the English word "ceremony" to denote an event, their use of the word "ceremony" carries these similar implications of spiritual meaning to them. When English-language speakers use the term 'ceremony', however, to denote an event, the word does not

necessarily signify any connection with spirituality. A language by itself does not encompass and cannot display the whole of consciousness. However, language competency (in any language) determines to a large degree the measure of what is popularly understood as 'consciousness': the cognitive capacity of the individual and the ability to give expression to that capacity in ways that others will understand. [20]

The *wihkohtowin* in this work has been translated as the "dance of the ancestors". Another translation that is commonly used is "tea dance", although this translation does not usually refer to the same ceremony. The exact terms arising from the translation of the Cree word, as is true for any translation, depends primarily on the degree of knowledge, understanding and competence in the two languages and in the two cultures being interfaced through the translation process.

Language is based on definitions, and effective communication through language is based on modes of interaction and exchange that are successfully propelled by these definitions. Language and that part of consciousness that has been defined in terms of cognition and intellectual awareness are necessarily linked. In this case of oral discourse around a Cree ceremony, if an individual is not knowledgeable about the structures and relationships of meanings within both the Cree and English languages, then s/he will be unable to accurately describe or name the event. Nor will s/he be able to make the necessary distinctions to permit the easy acquisition of meaning by a participant who is 'outside' the cultural constructs or context of the event. This is not to suggest that the speaker is unaware of or unconscious of words and their meanings as these are being used in the interaction. It is merely to point out that in the space of the bilingual interface, the speaker is conscious of one meaning and the hearer is conscious of another. These meanings are not necessarily 'shared', similar, or even compatible.

In verbal interactions, the primary activity is not the exchange of meanings, it is the creation of meanings within the consciousness of the hearer or speaker. In this manner,

---

[20] Canadian society in general tends to collapse 'consciousness' and intelligence', equating levels of consciousness with results on intelligence quotient testing, still a popular form of intelligence, and therefore consciousness ranking in mainstream society, where little regard is given to the implications of language on this popular and severely restricted notion of consciousness

the Cree speaker who uses the word "ceremony" has understood the word to imply something inherently spiritual. S/he is speaking from a Cree consciousness where the force of a ceremony is known to be one that creates the specific conditions and opportunity for personal transformation of individual *being*. Further, s/he is most likely using the English word that s/he has heard most often used by English-speakers to describe the Cree events that they have observed. The gap in understanding is that the English-speaker is using a word to name that which is immediately apparent (visible) and seems to fit with the English meaning, both denotation and connotation, of the word "ceremony": a formal collection of rituals, with no necessary allusions to spirituality.

A particular ceremony or ritual is understood by the participants through the shared meanings carried in the words of its description and/or its naming. The inclusion of rituals that are in and of themselves "ceremonies" (carrying the Cree and Metis sense of "spiritual significance") may be a part of the 'main' or larger event or ceremony. In the same way, the main or larger "ceremony" may accurately be understood as an all-encompassing "ritual" that may be composed of a number of rituals that can and do stand alone in other circumstances. It is the people themselves who are invited or who attend a *wihkihtowin*, for example, who give meaning to the ordering and placement of the layers of rituals, a meaning derived primarily from lived experiences, experiences that often, but not necessarily, includes some formal "teaching and learning".

In this discussion of the *wihkohtowin*, the "dance of the ancestors" translation was put forward by a missionary priest, and has since then been used by some of the people with whom he worked.[21] The "tea dance" translation is one that I have heard used very often when I have asked Cree speakers for a translation of the Cree word into English. However, "tea dance" seems to most accurately translate a different Cree word, *macisimowin*. This word *macisimowin* names a dance or a celebration to commemorate a special event such as a birthday or an anniversary. As I have it heard the translation "tea dance" for the *wihkohtowin* most often in conversations with Cree-speaking Metis, that term may be used to generalize a response and thereby avoid specifying any

---

[21] Fr.Roger Vandersteene and his protégé, Fr.Paul Hernou have both contributed immensely to translations between Cree and English terms that contain elements of spirituality reflecting both traditional Northern Cree and Christianity.

particularities of disclosure regarding individual or collective spiritual beliefs and/or practices.

The term *tea dance* has also been used freely by the White people who came into what was once traditional Cree territory. The use of this English term describes the obvious activity of the group, dancing, and probably became the most common English term of translation that was heard most often by the Cree speakers. For the Cree speakers then, whether Cree or Metis, the adoption and usage of common English terms such as "dance" to translate the names of Cree events would eliminate any complex problems associated with meaningful communication between the two language groups. The Metis people especially, whose language competency by necessity was often at least bilingual, would easily observe and note the occasions of miscommunication (mistranslation and/or misunderstanding) within the verbal interactions between members of two language groups. The logical outcome of this observation would be to avoid groping for words to express subtleties of meanings associated with differences, for example, between concepts of epistemology and ontology. The common-sense approach would be to aim instead for words that could cross and re-cross the closed boundaries created by linguistic systems, simultaneously creating a sense of shared meanings and dialogue between the communicants. This would avoid or eliminate many potential challenges and philosophical questions that could not easily be answered or expressed in either language. The basic issues of life would not, in the minds of most people at that time or in the present, for that matter, likely be affected by how someone translated a particular word. The power of hermeneutics to free that part of consciousness lying bound within the constraints of language has not yet been considered by the majority of persons within any population.

I have been arguing that, in the past, the names of several Cree ceremonies were agglomerated by Cree speakers into the single term of translation, "tea dance". This was at least partially based on an individual wish to avoid certain types of disclosures that might arise through a form of philosophical debate that would only reluctantly be entered into. In significant ways, however, it is irrelevant whether or not the argument is valid. In contemporary language usage, the seemingly subtle but complex differences between dancing in the *wihkohtowin* and dancing in the *macisimowin* are still being dissolved into

one English word: *tea dance*. In the logic of many Indigenous persons, when they use the term *tea dance* in reference to both events, such a term serves both the purpose of naming and also the enabling of dialogue. Where a state of dialogue with shared meanings cannot easily be attained between Cree language and English language speakers, this position seems reasonable. It can also be argued that this is a reasonable position to uphold where in contemporary Canadian society many Indigenous Cree and Metis persons are not highly articulate in either the Cree language or the English language.[22]

In some cases, some Cree language speakers have indicated that the use of *tea dance* to translate both events - the *wihkohtowin* and the *macisimowin* - is an indication that the speakers themselves believe that to articulate in English the actual differences between the events themselves, or in other words, to talk about the real meanings of the events, cannot have any actual significance to either participant or non-participant. The participant who has heard the Cree words that separate and distinguish the events understands immediately that having specific Cree words is more important than struggling over verbalization of translations from Cree into English. The knowing and the understanding of the meanings within the event will follow and be based upon the experiences wrought through participation. There often can be no "accurate" translations across and between languages, but in the matter of naming or describing two Cree ceremonies, this doesn't prevent or even inhibit the capacity of any participant to acquire knowledge and understanding of either ceremony based on a deeply personal experience of transformation.

A non-participant will likely continue to perceive the events as "ceremonies", not realizing that referring to both events as *tea dances* will create a theoretical category that is only useful to English language speakers who are not hesitant about creating structures on which to hang meanings and descriptions of a world they have only imagined. Such categories can only be used for the superficial exchange of words and such superficiality clouds the accuracy of perceptions, totally impedes the capacity to accurately verbalize those perceptions, and destroys the possibility of any internal consistency of reasoning

---

[22] A concern that has begun to finally receive some attention. The politics around languages as sources of power has begun to address the issues of indigenous languages and their effects on individuals and societies

based on such verbalization. Without the experiences that bring about a shared knowledge of words and their meanings, two parties cannot enter into a dialogue.

It is this shared knowledge of words that enables the creation, revelation or elucidation of shared meanings by those in dialogue. Without shared meanings, there is only the exchange of words. With only the exchange of words, especially if these words are based on illusory intellectual constructs of imagined worlds, the function of individual (or collective, for those who accept the notion of a collective consciousness) consciousness and its associated responsibility as the driving force of dialogue and discourse is denied, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Over the years many White people came and lived beside the Cree people, sharing their physical spaces but not necessarily their cultures or languages. Common daily observations have shown that it is really the more "unschooled" people -those white people unschooled in Cree ways and those Cree people unschooled in English ways - who comfortably and easily used and continue to use the word *tea dance* to name a particular category of ceremony. This might suggest then that the word *tea dance* is closer to the world of primary orality than it is to the literate one, if we define primary orality and literacy in relation to degree of 'schooling'. In actual fact, the translation of *wihkohtowin* as *dance of the ancestors* is probably more reflective of Cree primary orality because it is a much more accurate descriptor or 'namer' of the event and its experiences.

This demonstrates that there are always at least two perspectives in the analysis of Cree-English translations because both sets of words reflect a constant and changing interplay between the primary orality of the Cree-speaking world and the literate world of the English-speaker. The obvious forms of interplay are dependent on factors such as language competency, knowledge of language semantics, knowledge of language structures as well as knowledge, understanding and experiences within the cultures involved. There are as well the many other more subtle aspects of the power of words and languages. This is their inherent power to reflect the philosophies and beliefs of the people. Even if language specialists could find ways to logically overcome the most obvious difficulties in the work of translation, it would still be impossible to 'translate' the lived cultural effects of philosophies, beliefs, and feelings associated with the words and

terms themselves. Yet, ironically, herein lies the source of the power and meaning of those words and terms.

The debilitating effect of translating a language as if it is only a knowledge-and-skills exercise is not ignored in the Cree world. However, because Cree words are not associated with people who hold significant political or economic power in Canada, the translations of Cree into English will continue according to expedience and efficiency, and in some cases, according to good will on the parts of the Cree people. To most Cree speakers, it is not perceived to be a significant issue whether or not the translated English words reflect the primary orality inherent to the original Cree words. One possible reason is that the meaning of the Cree word cannot be fully understood by most members of the English-speaking society even if it were to be accurately expressed in the English language. Most such members would not be able to make the transition from a literate way of understanding the context of the word to understanding from a context of primary orality.

## Orality Consciousness

Orality consciousness has consistently and conspicuously remained a thread in the social sciences literature relating to Aboriginal peoples. The fact that many Aboriginal languages of the Americas were not passed on nor preserved through writing is perhaps the strongest evidence of the power of orality consciousness. Such a fact has also, however, resulted in references being made to the societies and cultures of the Indigenous populations of the continent as "oral" cultures and societies, distinguishing them from, or even placing them opposite to "literate" cultures and societies. Although the debate continues, perhaps more by implication than direct appeal to logic and analysis, contemporary work in the field of literacy (adult) has pointed out the limitations of theories that place "literacy" and "orality" at opposite ends of an imagined spectrum denoting degrees of consciousness.

The work of Walter Ong on primary orality and literacy (1992) as well as the work of his contemporaries in associated research around cognition and communication in general (Goody, Havelock, Innis, Lord, Luria, Malinowski as cited in Ong) did not display openly the underlying frame of their work as a spectrum of consciousness. The research

on orality consciousness has emphasized a notion of literacy as a consciousness that *evolved* over time, replacing a consciousness of orality. The theorists avoided centering their discussions of orality and literacy on the experiences of 'real' persons and peoples. This seemed to suggest that a theory of literacy or orality could be developed apart from a careful and scholarly consideration of how those theories fit or didn't fit with lifeworld experiences of people who actually lived within a consciousness of primary orality. Havelock (1997), another scholar whose work on literacy and orality is highly respected and recognized internationally, did address obliquely the connections between orality and literacy through the example of the European 'arrival' amongst the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. However, his theory was not in any accurate way applied to the reality of the Indigenous peoples.

This vague and obvious omission/denial of identifiable human presence as critical to a discourse on orality and literacy indicates a reluctance to overtly proclaim the conclusion that rises directly and logically from the premises of Ong's and Havelock's propositions: orality belonged to or rather reflected 'primitive' minds and societies. Literacy on the other hand was associated with or was an indicator of 'civilized' minds and societies. For the scholars in that field of study, literacy evolved from orality. Therefore, in more recent work, orality is interesting only in terms of how it was suddenly back in the consciousness loop (or fold) following the 'invention' and development of computers and more complex technology that had the potential to eliminate the written text, the identifying feature of literacy for centuries. This is of course a fascinating and complex issue that requires further study.

However, in relation to Indigenous peoples, and certainly to the Cree and Metis people referred to in this discussion, a discourse on primary orality and/or orality consciousness cannot begin from the existing data on primary orality as it has been included and defined from within the 'Western' discourse on literacy and orality. Orality consciousness stands apart from literacy in that it represents its own distinct way of being and knowing.

Orality consciousness is affected by literacy but it is not subsumed by literacy because it is not in a continuum of human psychological or cognitive development, moving from orality to literacy. The evidence of this is in the lifeworlds of contemporary Cree and

Metis people where individuals are immersed in a society that demands a certain level of literacy skills and knowledge, and yet these individuals give expression to their beings from a consciousness of orality. Therefore, what stands out from this lived re[illegible]is that there is an even greater need from the Indigenous perspective for research[illegible]es on primary orality and the contemporary expression of orality consciousness, as[illegible]cs totally distinct from literacy.

The previous discussion around the *wihkohtowin* as an exceptional example of primary orality alive and well in contemporary Indigenous societies is a good context for the following section of this work.

I am using the term "orality consciousness" to describe the state of consciousness that arises from experiences that are based on the sounds of the language, other sounds used by the people such as music, drumming, singing, and chanting, and most importantly, the state of communion that is achieved and maintained between parts engaged in discourse. Above all, however, orality consciousness is about living within the power of spoken words.

*The Power of the Word in the Articulation of an Indigenous Reality*

This section of the work will consider briefly the implications of language in thinking patterns and models of an Indigenous world-view. The focus will move then to a discussion of the "power of the word" within one Indigenous reality. To experience the "power" of the word encompasses and moves an individual far beyond the limitations of the concrete or the denotative aspects of a "word". To acquire a sense of this power or force that energizes and gives vitality to a symbol of any sort requires a particular type of experience: an experience of meaning being birthed from a symbol. Words are symbols, but this particular connection between a word and an experience can move "words" beyond the capacity of symbols whose primary function is to point, direct or signify. It is this "power" of words beyond symbols that is contained in a language or is inherent to a particular form of consciousness or reflective of a particular paradigm. When we as speakers and hearers of discourse are not immersed in a shared paradigm of reality, the "power" of our words is lost to us. The power still 'is', but in terms of the value, meaning, or purpose of such energy in our lives, these are non-existent. The attempt to articulate

an Indigenous paradigm of reality is dependent upon our capacity and willingness to endure whatever it will take to harness the "power" of the word within a shared paradigm.

Human beings tend to believe and accept readily the indivisible connection between language and thinking, in most cases perceiving them to be one and the same. The intimacy of the connection is of course obvious; but can we accept without question the notion that thinking cannot or does not happen without language? Thinking can and does happen without language because thinking can and does occur at various levels or states of human being other than the intellectual, that state in which language dominates. It is this dominant position of language within the human repertoire of knowledge that has given rise to the notion that thinking is impossible without language. In fact, the more accurate statement to describe the situation would be "talking about thinking is impossible without language". That also implies and includes the "talking" that occurs within the person, what we sometimes refer to as processes of reflection, introspection, consideration, intellectualization, or 'self-talk'. These processes are normally associated with different modes of thinking. As such, they fit with and support the notion that thinking requires language.

To confine the human experience of thinking to the limitations of individual language competency and knowledge is to limit the expression and potential development of the human capacity for being and knowing. To limit the human experience of thinking to the limitations of a particular language to describe all aspects of the human experience is also to limit the development of human capacity. We *are* much more than we can *say*. Even if we had the perfect and whole vocabulary, we have no way of knowing whether or not we have reached the limits of our thinking. Whether or not 'thinking ' requires, flows through, or finds its existence within the medium of language is still unknown.

Of course, we can argue that by definition, the essence of 'intellect' is 'thought', and 'intellect' is comprised of what we know and how we put it together. What we know then is what we think. What we think comes to us in words, therefore without words, or language, there is no thought. Without thought then, there is no knowing. But experience tells us that this conclusion is in fact inaccurate. There are many ways of knowing without thinking, ways which, once embarked upon, can be impeded by

thought. The knowledge that is gained in these ways will have no meaning or possibility of application of course without words and thoughts. However, to come to this point is not to admit a sort of preeminence of language and words in the fulfillment of human capacity, it is to recognize that our limitations as human beings are often defined by the theories (or paradigms) we use to explain our ways of being and knowing.

An Indigenous paradigm of reality ascribes power to many symbols, words being one type of symbol. Indigenous social and personal reality includes consideration of such power, and individuals live with the knowledge and effects of such power every day of their lives. The knowledge that words contain power is common. Although many of the old ways that demonstrate the recognition of the power of the word are now changed, the recognition of such power remains. Many persons in northern Cree communities will not name themselves in introductions. It is extremely rude in many Cree communities to expect a person to introduce him or herself in a meeting, for example, even though Canadian society will do this as a matter of respect.

The names of those who have passed on to the other side are also not expressed. Relationships are often used as names in direct or indirect address and often in preference to given names. Words used to describe or ascribe relationships at the same time that they name persons are good examples of the power of words. The words create relationships at the same time as they name.

The power of words to create experience is also evident in words used in ceremonies. Songs that belonged to persons who have long ago passed on are still being sung today. The words of the songs came from experiences and the power of the words continued to evolve with new experiences. Today the vitality of the words provides the means to other new experiences. The power of the word in the mystical sense, where the word itself seems to create experience or being, is evident mostly in ceremonies and individual spiritual practices. The concept in Western experience or teachings that is closest to this notion of the creative power of the word is that found in the Christian scriptures "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Here the Word is understood as the Greek *Logos,* the divine principle of reason that gives order to the universe and links the human mind to the mind of God. The Word in

this context is interpreted in contemporary theology as the person of Jesus Christ; He is the created embodiment of the Word.

The power of the word as it is being presented here is certainly based on a principle that extends beyond the limitations of thinking and language and comes imbued with the energy of creative powers beyond those controlled by human intellect and human being. A more detailed discussion of ceremony or ceremonies will not necessarily display or result in a clearer understanding of this seemingly esoteric notion of the "power of the word". However, most people can call on personal recollection of experiences gained, especially during ceremonial events, where the power of the word was a present and crucially operative element of the experience. Ceremonies involve our spiritual beings in very particular ways, and this, along with the fact that the words within ceremonies usually do more than act as signifiers should in no way detract a scholar from including these elements into the articulation of a shared paradigm of reality.

At a conference, I was a panelist for a presentation entitled "*Peytah way tahkosowak*". The term implies several things: that there are /sounds belonging to some beings, that these beings are being heard, and that these beings are coming closer. There is nothing in the meaning of the term to indicate what sorts of beings these are - they can be spirit beings or physical beings. The important part of the word in this case is that which indicates the movement of sound, the coming closer. What is it that is coming closer? The English translation that was used during the presentation was "Indigenous voices", but these "voices" were not limited to those persons who were or who could be physically present there that day; those voices were not limited to those present in that space at that particular time. Those voices could belong to those who had gone before us, to our grandfathers and grandmothers, to our spirit guides. The one who hears the voices is the one who says *Pehtaway tahkosowak*, and is also the one who has recognized who it is that approaches. Within Indigenous reality, who is approaching determines how one listens and how one prepares to hear. It determines how one acts. When every word of a language is similarly laden with meaning and direction for thought patterns and being constellations, it is not difficult to imagine and to understand the difficulties inherent in the notion of developing a shared paradigm of reality between different worlds of words.

I have been talking of the challenges involved in the development of shared paradigms but I am not advocating that Indigenous peoples expend energy in this direction. This is not to demonstrate my lack of compassion or disregard for harmony amongst peoples; it is to state openly my opinion, based on many years of observation and direct experience, that such effort would be wasted. To many non-Indigenous Canadians, the notion of different realities is simply absurd and perhaps merely the Indigenous form of rationalization for irresponsibility and social inadequacy.

However, to consider seriously and consciously the articulation of an Indigenous paradigm to describe or explain the order of the world is an absolutely necessary task for Indigenous peoples. The articulation of such a paradigm will evolve as a part of the natural movement towards personal and individual fulfillment of human potential. We will want to talk to each other and to share our thoughts, to participate and experience ourselves consciously as members of an Indigenous collective. We will want to recognize concretely the beings from our past who have shaped us and who are with us as we shape our own world. These actions and events are the elements of the Indigenous paradigm that is and that will continue to be. How we give expression to this paradigm within the confines of the English language is a very individual matter, but the consequences of such expression are far-reaching and over-arching, enveloping the collective as being immersed simultaneously in past, present, and future.

To shift slightly to a different focus with the same lens, I often associate the expression "power of the word" with Paulo Freire's "naming" of the world in Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1983). Freire speaks plainly about the need for oppressed human beings to engage in the process of reclaiming their own powers through the capacity of naming their own world. Freire doesn't waste any words when he talks about the effects of oppression and how oppression must be addressed:

> Reality which becomes oppressive results in the contra-distinction of men as oppressors and oppressed. The latter... must acquire a critical awareness of oppression... One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge men's consciousness. Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. (Freire1983, p. 36)

This 'critical awareness' of oppression comes about through the constant interplay of individual and group reflection and action, or *praxis*. Reflection requires words, and these words are expressed in a context of "present, existential, concrete" situations (Freire 1983, p. 85). Freire's basic position relative to language and thought is that language cannot exist without thought, "and neither language nor thought can exist without a structure to which they refer" (Freire 1983, p. 85). Freire refers to educators and politicians, but I think we can generalize this to be more inclusive: "In order to communicate effectively, educator and politician must understand the structural conditions in which the thought and language of the people are dialectically framed" (Freire 1983, p. 86).

While Freire was referring in this quote primarily to the concrete structural conditions of society, I have been emphasizing the theoretical or paradigmatic structures upon which language and thought are based. My emphasis was not made in the sense of prioritization based on significance or value, but merely to focus on one aspect over another for discussion purposes. There is an extensive body of literature that addresses directly the concrete structures of many Indigenous societies, and as well discusses the many and varied forms of oppression and injustice that often seem perceived to be a "standard" part of Indigenous life internationally. In education for Indigenous peoples, for example, relevant areas of study have included work by educational researchers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous in Indigenous languages, curriculum and program development, teacher training, student attrition and retention, student achievement, as well as family and community health and well-being.

In other words, there is available a huge resource base of knowledge that speaks clearly to the issues of Indigenous students' failures to adapt successfully to 'mainstream' schooling, and that speaks clearly to the issues of Indigenous persons' 'failure' to be 'productive' members of society, and that speaks clearly to the issues of Indigenous persons' failures to be rehabilitated successfully after incarceration, and that speaks clearly to the issues of poverty and economic deprivation, and that speaks clearly to the issues of violence, both self and other inflicted. There is enough information already out there to know that the existence and availability of such knowledge is not sufficient by itself to bring about transformations of that reality that gives birth to these issues that

shape and impact on Indigenous experiences and Indigenous identities. If the existence of that knowledge were sufficient, then the concrete effects of such transformations would be visible and obvious to every observer.

However, this information is not enough to bring about the will, the intent and the hope that is required to sustain the transformation of inhuman conditions that do not support the ongoing process of being/becoming human. Such conditions or structures of reality do not support the development of "the reflection and action which truly transform reality" and are "the source of knowledge and creation" (Freire 1983, p. 91). Yet Indigenous reality as it is being experienced daily is exactly this. This is not to deny the small numbers of individuals who "make it" through, (note the terminology) nor is it to deny that transformation is continual and ongoing in Indigenous communities: the proof of that in the academic world is the presence of Indigenous scholars in every academic field of study, the proof in the communities is that the ceremonies go on and the people live.

In all of this, we live knowing that we are a part of a whole that operates outside the limits of time and space. This is the point of distinction between the Indigenous paradigm and the Freirean paradigm. Indigenous peoples are oppressed and we can use the same wonderful and eloquent lessons and indeed the same language for analysis and action. However, we stand in a different spot when we reflect and we may even shift into a different state of being in order to prepare ourselves to reflect. We know our actions will extend across time and space and therefore must be considered very carefully. Like Freire, we know that our words are actions in the sense that they can precipitate change and transformation in 'reality'.

Freire helps to show us how words are used to take power from people. People whose words or language have been stolen are helpless and imprisoned within circumstances and situations they cannot affect or transform, no matter how negative or destructive they may be. The violence that is associated with ripping out a person's tongue cannot be more abhorrent and diabolical than stealing a person's words very slowly over generations of psychological tyranny maintained by keeping people in states of dispossession, displacement, and dependence and isolation.

How does a child begin to learn words that have become something repugnant? How does a child learn a language that comes clothed in anger, harshness and cruelty?

I remember this teacher as cruel and judgmental. She ridiculed my brother because he used the wrong word to respond to a picture flashcard. He said our mother had made an orange pie. He didn't recognize the image or perhaps he didn't remember the word "lemon". The word "lemon" wasn't used in the community much because lemons weren't a common commodity at the fur trading store. This teacher ridiculed my brother and called him "stupid", but he was a child who hadn't seen too many lemons. How was he to know that she would hate him for that? When he was nine years old, he went to the Aberhart Sanitorium with tuberculosis and we didn't see him for six months, another "halfbreed" statistic. I believe strongly there was a relationship between the harshness of her attitude and actions and his illness.

A good friend shared this story with me. She visited an old couple who asked her for help. They had had a daughter when they were young. While the young mother was still in the hospital, she had a visit from the nurse who informed her that her healthy daughter who had been born a few hours earlier had died. The young couple mourned and left for home without ever seeing the baby or the body. After a while, they had another child, a son. This child was a healthy and happy three-year-old when a priest came to visit. He informed the parents that they could not take their son with them as they had planned on their seasonal move to a winter camp. The priest took the boy from them and they left. When they returned, the child was gone. They could get no information from the priest. Years passed and then, one day, a car drove up to the house and a boy was let out into the yard. When the couple went out to see who it was, they saw their own son, now six years old. When they tried to talk to the boy, he did not respond. He was mute. Today, he is a middle-aged man, and he still doesn't speak. The mother had asked for help to try to find out what had happened to her son so many years ago. The couple does not have command of the English language and because of this they were robbed of the most precious gift of creation: their own child. Isn't that price a bit high for the absence of words and the personal power that they represent?

What about the power of the word in politics? In religion? In identity? In relationships? In spirituality?

Without words.....

How does one define the world? Create the world? Share the world? Do you always see the world as others describe it? Do you wait for someone else to create a world for you to live in and respond to? Do you live in isolation, with nothing to share but your isolation? Do you get raped and assaulted without a struggle to defend yourself? Do you allow someone else to ask the questions so you can find your answers in their questions?

Language and literacy contain the power of the spoken and the written word when it names and impacts on real people living in real worlds: indian, injun, metis, halfbreed, squaw, squaw-man, buck, native, aboriginal, indigenous.

The experiences of Indigenous people in relation to languages are well known and indisputable. Millions of persons have been forced to stop using their first language and to learn a foreign language. In that same process, the same numbers depict an even more horrific impact on Indigenous identity and being. Where people no longer have fluency in either their mother tongue or a foreign language, they have been left vulnerable and helpless in the face of continuous assaults on their normal human processes of development as individuals and collectives. Although there has been a constant pressure on state authorities from Indigenous educators and Indigenous societies to support Indigenous language revitalization and retention, we have not been able to develop and implement Indigenous language policies which explicitly support Indigenous people to maintain their identity and their world through the power of their own "words". It is important however to note that we do continue to mould theoretical discourses around languages, semiotics and hermeneutic phenomenology. As long as our children are immersed within the public schooling system and we are members of a larger Canadian society, the contribution of Indigenous scholars to these discourses is vital. Such contributions and discourses must surely find their way towards the realignment and balancing of theories and approaches to break the patterns of language loss and end the terrible silences of Indigenous peoples locked into violent and destroying worlds.

## The Continuity of Orality Consciousness

One of the many periods of darkness and hopelessness in the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada was the years between the late-1880 and mid -1900 when the government operated its residential schools for "Indians". When the federal government first started to consider how it would meet its obligations under treaties with the various Indigenous groups to provide education for the children, the government officials turned to partnerships with the already established Christian missions and basically contracted out to the missionaries (Dickason, 1992, pp. 333-335). This approach was economical which pleased the government and it was fairly unregulated which pleased the missionaries. They could select the programs and the methods without any real interference from anyone.

Two types of schools the industrial school and the boarding school, operated until about 1920. The industrial schools were closed down in the early 1990's, but the boarding schools and day schools on reserves continued to operate until the mid-1950. The stories of abuse that have surfaced in the last decade have drawn a picture of human destruction of such magnitude that it has been compared to the Holocaust under Adolf Hitler. This work will not elaborate on this period because there are Indigenous scholars have written and can speak of this period of history from first hand experiences (Linda Bull, 1999, Roland Chrisjohn, c1995). The point that needs to be repeated is that the narratives of abuse of innocent and vulnerable, unprotected children, abuse that destroyed many before they could return home were not sensationalized fiction. Most Indigenous persons including Metis and "Indian" of those generations knew of those stories, either from first hand experience or from the stories being passed between the adults. In some cases, the narratives were not passed on, the personal stories were not told. The veterans who returned form WWII and from Viet Nam often could not recount the horrors that they had lived through, they returned and re-lived those past experiences in their own places of darkness and silence. Forgetting became the most important characteristic of survival. Why would it be any different for survivors of the residential schools, especially if they had been under shellfire as five and six year olds?

Those people who were categorized, through Treaty primarily, as Indians had very few choices by the early 1900's except to submit to the rulings from the federal government and its agents. "Amerindian children could be committed to boarding schools and kept there until the age of eighteen on the authority of the Indian agent" (Dickason, 1992, p. 335). The internment camps of Indigenous North American children were not different from the Jewish holding camps or the Japanese internment camps in British Columbia after the bombing of Pearl Harbour. One significant difference, however, continues to impact the lives of Indigenous families. While the Jewish people and the Japanese people lived and died with their children, the horror of the residential school plan lay in the diabolical twist that it gave to a powerful and probably universal principle: it is the role and function of the adults in a community to protect and guard the lives and well-being of their children. If they do not, or as is true in this case, they cannot, then is it not likely that they will live with that guilt for as long as they are alive. In the case of Indigenous reality, the beings of thousands of Indigenous parents and children were literally stolen, imprisoned and transformed into an emptiness that deadened the pain, fear, helplessness, and isolation of their camps. This emptiness carried forward into succeeding generations. One or two generations of our ancestors watched helplessly as their children were "taken away", watched as their children's lives were reshaped and forever altered by alien enemy forces. What evidence is there that the impact of this event on our grandparents of a hundred years ago has worn off, that we have forgiven ourselves for standing by in silence, watching, as this wound was and is being inflicted on our collective psyche?

Those adults who as children and youth lived in the boarding schools have their own stories to tell and the stories belong to them individually. Some general statements can be made that are reflective of most of the literature around this topic. A few of the stories of residential school experiences reflect good and happy times of learning, where individuals observed that the strength of their learning was focussed on the connections that they were able to maintain with their homes and families during the time that they were in the boarding school situations. For those others who merely survived physically, they talk about years of turmoil and psychological displacement following their "release" or departure from the residential school situation.

Personal and social problems such as alcohol and drug addictions, physical and sexual abuse, high rates of violence, incarceration, and suicide and low rates of academic success and employment have all been attributed to the residential school experiences of thousands of Indigenous persons. As to whether or not these experiences can be defined or described as being those of a collectivity and as distinct from those experiences of individuals is not clear. Neither is the question clear as to whether or not the impacts of those experiences can accurately be described in relation to a collectivity as distinct from and in relation to individuals. Both questions are deserving of critical analysis and further study. The question of how many individuals it takes to make a collectivity is always a minor and superficial one in a discourse of the relationship between individual and collectivity as abstract concepts describing two critical shapes of human being.

How do Indigenous peoples like the Woodland Cree and the Metis address the matter of individual and social healing after such traumatic disruptions of individual lives and disintegration of communities? Another and perhaps more useful way to phrase the question, at least in terms of this analysis, is to ask how and by what means then has the intergenerationality of Indigenous identity been maintained after such debilitating trauma to individuals, families, and the Indigenous collectivity? The one way that has contributed to the maintenance of intergenerationality as the most significant element of Indigenous identity, historically as well as in the more recent past and into the contemporary period of human history, is the practice of individual and communal ceremonies or spiritual events. These events and celebrations are important to individual identity formation because they build a sense of personal identity that is strengthened by the growing individual consciousness of membership within a collectivity, a critical dimension of identity formation that was not available to individuals housed in residential schools. Such events as the *wihkohtowi*n provided an opportunity to these individual participants and now to their descendants for powerful conscious connections with the presences of all the living persons, the ancestors and the spirits who have always been participants in the event as a respected part of the collective family/group or community.

The *wihkohtowin* experience of orality consciousness is one of healing, a re-connecting to self and to collectivity, not in a cerebral logical way, but at the deepest level of acting and engagement with life. It is psychological healing of a most intense nature - that of

knowing who you are and where you belong. The participation in the event is an active sharing and unfolding of ancestral memories, active in the sense that participants engage in the re-creation and re-newing of life, both of self and of collective, through the conscious communion established with the ancestors themselves through the ceremony itself. To celebrate in this manner, recognizing formally the significant presence of the ancestors in our lives is about honouring and strengthening - honouring the ancestors and strengthening the collectivity, whether the collectivity is a family group or a community.

The wide-spread and continuous practice of ceremonies that give formal recognition to the ancestors and their presence in ordinary lives pronounces with unquestionable clarity that the concept of intergenerationality continues to function as a critical element of Indigenous identity formation processes and consciousness as these are given expression in Northern Alberta Cree and Metis communities. This is not to imply that every Cree and Metis person will know and participate in the *Wihkohtowin*, or in any other specific ceremony of that gives recognition to the presence of the ancestors in contemporary Indigenous lives. But it is to state unequivocally, with apologies for those parts of the work that are obtuse and poorly articulated, that lived Cree and Metis experiences validate the importance that ancestors have in individual identity formation and consciousness.

Oral and written forms of texts and scholarship, Indigenous narratives, and elder's teachings abound with this concept of intergenerationality as a supporting structure of Indigenous identity formation theory. In the Indigenous communities, people talk about ancestors whose identities have evolved through the generations and now lie embedded within the narratives of today. Whether or not an Indigenous individual consciously knows and can expound upon particular theories or elements of theories on Indigenous identity formation is not an indicator of the rightness or wrongness of this naming and description of intergenerationality. The majority of individuals that make up any society or cultural group are not philosophers or theoreticians. People on the street have no reason to discuss the identity theories of Piaget, Freud, and Jung, or the consciousness theories of Ornstein, Varela, and Ouspensky. What is to be realized from this work is that Indigenous individuals live out their on-going relationships with their ancestors as part of their own present and unfolding identities.

As a collective experience, the *wihkohtowin* is a tremendous source of healing power and a powerful expression of orality consciousness. Personal contact with many Woodland Cree and Metis people over the years has demonstrated that the power of orality consciousness within the Woodland Cree societies of Northern Alberta has not in any significant way diminished despite the centuries of assimilationist practices that have been and continue to be implemented and enforced through the institutions of schooling. There have been transformations in the manner and types of expression that orality consciousness has taken, but these cannot accurately be described as a diminishing of such consciousness.

In a few areas of the far north of Alberta, the impact of Canadian White society seems to have been less dramatic than in the more central or southern areas. Some residents from many of the smaller, more isolated northern Cree communities have commented and demonstrate that they have retained the traditional vitality of their languages and their cultural practices with minimal disruption from residential schools, often only at a superficial level. In other Northern areas, and in some areas to the south, however, individuals describe how a few of the spiritual practices were driven 'underground' or hidden because of various external social and religious pressures. These events reflect very powerfully the consciousness of a people whose lives are given expression through orality, where the types of interactions and relationships that are shaped depend upon the state of communion that can be achieved between persons using words and sounds.

Over the past several decades, the re-emergence of vital spiritual ceremonies that involve orality supported by 'text' is more an indication that the views of Canadian White society have changed than an indication that the practices have actually been revived. Such spirituality and practices have never died nor have the spiritual leaders or individuals ever stopped expressing their beliefs in the traditional ways of their ancestors. This was not so much due to theoretical and abstract reasoning or teachings that the "traditional ways" must be kept alive for some externally driven motivation; it was simply a matter of *being*. If the person was an Indigenous *being*, then s/he must *be* in certain ways, and those ways had been given and taught by the ancestors, to be remembered and carried through ceremonies intergenerationally. There was no other way to be as long as there was human life. It wasn't a matter of protest; it was a matter of survival and common sense.

The northern peoples have always evinced an openness and an acceptance towards individual forms of spiritual expression, believing and respecting that the forces of creation are open to each individual being to be interpreted according to each individual's lived experience. There are contemporary strong indicators that Indigenous groups are realizing even more clearly that it is within the re-connections with their own oral histories and within the expression of these sacred re-connections that lies the healing and fulfillment of the individual and collective capacity to enter fully into the power of orality consciousness.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: LIFEWORLDS AS REFLECTIONS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

### Models of Consciousness: The Underpinnings of Identity

*Introduction*

Violence and healing have both been described in ways that suggest their deep penetration into the Indigenous psyche, both as individual and collective. This means that the individual consciousness that evolves through the generations will somehow reflect the impact of these forces on the beings of the people. In a theoretical consideration of Indigenous consciousness as it is being lived out or given expression in contemporary Indigenous lifeworlds of North America, the significance of violence and healing cannot be ignored or de-emphasized. In this work, these factors thread their way throughout the whole text, sometimes more overtly than others. At the end of the work, I will return to pull these two threads together so as not to lose their particular colour in the whole pattern of Indigenous reality as experienced by Metis and Cree people in Northern Alberta.

In this section, I will discuss a consciousness model that is applicable to the life experiences of northern Alberta Cree and Metis people. I will not focus explicitly on violence and healing except to point out that the consciousness model reflecting the beings of these Indigenous peoples does not depict any tremendous shifts of knowledge or significant transformations in the traditional ways of being even though the people have had to incorporate into their lived experiences the penetrating impacts of both violence and healing. I make two interpretations from this.

Firstly, the fact that the model itself continues to reflect contemporary northern Cree reality and thought points to an inherent consistency and stability within the model itself. I see this complex and subtle interiority as flowing from and into a quality of tensile relatedness. This relatedness is sustained through dynamic forces of creation and re-creation that characterize the interiority of this model. It is these dynamic forces that give rise to the vital connection between the model and the Indigenous consciousness it is intended to elucidate or represent. This leads to the second point. In the manner of a mandala, the model depicts something external to itself, and yet is vitally connected to

that something else. In this case, the model depicts thought patterns and consciousness simultaneously as it's own vitality encompasses and sustains the enduring strength and capacity of the people to survive against tremendous adversities.

To contextualize my focus on Indigenous bush consciousness, I will refer to two models of consciousness in relation to Indigenous peoples. This discussion will be presented from within the framework of Indigenous lifeworlds and Indigenous thought and will be grounded in the physical geography of the Plains/Prairies and the Woodlands/Bush. The discussion related to the Plains consciousness is presented with reference to written information from two sources and not on knowledge acquired from my personal experience. I have chosen to use these two sources because together they represent and speak well as two perspectives from two different realities, and as I am suggesting, from two different forms of consciousness. Following some general background statements, my comments on the Plains model of consciousness are limited, but include a brief analysis of those sections in the two works that address one significant event in the history of the Plains peoples. The works are Black Elk Speaks (Neihardt, 1932) and The Ghost Dance Religion and The Sioux Outbreak of 1890 (Wallace, 1965) originally published as Part 2 of the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute, 1892-93(Mooney, 1896).

The rest of this chapter will address in more depth my own understanding about consciousness for Woodlands/Bush Cree and Metis in Northern Alberta. I will refer to several works for this part of the discussion as well as to conversations with other Indigenous researchers on specific topics about which there is virtually nothing written, at least, not in the English language. The literature that I have selected for referencing are Maps and Dreams (Brody, 1981), The Orders of the Dreamed (Brown & Brightman, 1988), The Ojibwa of Berens River (Hallowell, 1992), and Through the MacKenzie Basin (Mair, 1999 original publishing 1908).

### *Background*

This grounding on geographical features in association with Indigenous being is certainly not a new concept in the social sciences and, more recently, in environmental and human ecology studies despite the fact that often such association is more implied than directly

stated. The identities of Indigenous peoples across the "known" (in the Western sense) world have often been drawn in terms that, at the very least, implied some sort of primal relationship with geographical location and characteristics. This implied primal connection between Indigenous identity and the land has, in the past, fit well with the theories of evolution and civilization that situated Indigenous peoples within the social categorizations of "primitive" and "savage", "the uncivilized". Indigenous peoples were seen and known to be "not too far" from animals in terms of their human development.

The Western paradigm of evolution, and therefore its notions of science and consciousness, places humans above all other living things or beings. In traditional Western terms, it would be inappropriate to refer to animals as "beings", and the idea that any "beings" exist other than human must be relegated to concepts such as superstition, personification or anthropomorphism. Within an Indigenous cosmology that doesn't frame its notions of science and consciousness in terms of evolution, it is accepted that animals and other "beings" share the world with humans. The traditional Western views[23] have tended to display attitudes and beliefs that the evolution of "Indian" human beings was very much retarded in comparison to the evolution of "White" human beings. The connection then between Indigenous identity and the land was an easy concept to accept since it was consistent with the notion that Indigenous peoples like the four-footed creatures had not developed sufficiently to have consciously separated their identities (and beings) from the land that they lived on.[24]

The geographically based categorizations of Plains Cree and Woodlands/Bush Cree that continue to identify and distinguish between the two groups of Cree people can aptly be applied in a discussion of the primary distinctions between two consciousness models.

---

[23] I am referring here to sources that are cited as 'primary sources' such as Mair, Nelson and Mooney. These men were perceived in many ways to be 'supporters' of the "Indians" and their works are useful for understanding Indigenous and Euro-Canadian realities, both historical and contemporary; I am not giving credence by citing those many other hundreds of writers whose works merely present Indigenous peoples as objects of "scientific" inquiry.

[24] Overtones (or undertones) of allusion to this disability can also be found in the discourse on literacy and orality where Indigenous peoples cannot engage in critical abstract analysis because they cannot 'think about thinking' to the same level of sophistication as 'literate' persons, literacy supposedly offering that capacity where orality cannot.

These models are that consciousness model generally associated with the Indigenous peoples of the Plains, and that consciousness model that I will discuss in association with the Indigenous peoples of the Northern forests, woodlands or bush.

The Plains model of consciousness is commonly represented by a circle, a symbol grounded in the lifeworld of the Plains peoples. On the plains or prairies, when a person stands on a spot slightly elevated above the horizon, the perspective of that individual is the image of self at the centre of a huge circle. Space is endless, and vision is far-reaching. The person 'sees" him/herself at the center of the circle, and senses that a human being stands in a special place between earth and sky (heaven). The circle, in other words, describes the worldview as it is observed from the perspective of a person standing on a rise on the prairie. Here the sun pours down, a powerful and constant force of life-giving energy, directing an overt recognition of its own relationship to the world.

The Woodlands or Bush model of consciousness is commonly figured as a trail, a symbol grounded in the lifeworld of the bush peoples. In the bush, when a person leaves the home site, s/he steps immediately onto a trail, a path through the bush. The person looks up into a canopy shaped by the branches of trees. The sunlight falls through this canopy and the horizon is virtually non-existent as a significant concept in this particular setting. The shape of this lifeworld is not associated with the horizon, and space is not perceived or experienced as expansive and circular. Vision is a learned acuity. Space is close, sheltering and protective: one walks the trail with a strong sense of physical and spiritual surround; other beings and life forms share the space through which the trail passes. One is never alone. Here the sun shines filters down through a network of branches and leaves, a welcome, gentle, constant and indirect life-sustaining force.

## The Circle of the Plains

### *Introduction*

In the days of the buffalo hunts, the Plains cultures were more visibly and textually rich in comparison to the bush cultures. The more profuse descriptions of the Plains peoples exist perhaps because the peoples themselves were more outwardly expressive, more exotic and colorful with more recognizable forms on which to 'hang' the European

notions of culture and civilization: forms that included songs, stories, ornamentation, social organizations or gender specific societies and forms of governance and leadership as well as symbols and outward points of form that signified individual attainments or accomplishments. The word 'primitive' was rarely used to describe the Plains peoples; perhaps because their complex social systems provided examples of similarity with the European social systems and this enabled a simplistic and "primitive" form of parallelism and consequent understanding for the European. Such parallelisms were evident in terminology, as for instance where the spiritual practices of Plains peoples were accorded the status of "Indian religions" rather than simply "superstitions" as is often used in relation to the Northern practices of spirituality.

Although the Plains peoples were described as "savages", the word was used usually in relation to the 'brutality' of their "war' practices. From another perspective, the proliferation across Europe of characteristics generally associated with the Plains peoples and cultures probably arose as a result of the prolonged conflict over land between the European farmers and the Indigenous buffalo hunters on the plains and prairies of the west. The romantic tales of the cavalry, the "Mounties" and the cowboy heroes of the movies went far to establish and entrench into Western-European society and psyche the notion that the 'defeat" of the Indians on the plains of North America represented the "defeat" of all Indians. The fact that many Indigenous peoples existed who were not Plains peoples, and that not all Plains peoples were 'defeated" in the "American Indian Wars" has never been a part of common or public knowledge.[25]

The Plains model of the world or consciousness based on the circle has been described, referred to, and served as the basis of countless works by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers/writers. One of the most succinct texts to describe the circle was The Sacred Pipe, Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux as recorded and written by Joseph Epes Brown (1953). This text presents the circle clearly albeit somewhat indirectly as both the symbol and the source for a particular model of consciousness. The diagrams and descriptions within that work position the human being

[25] For an in-depth analysis of this intentional proliferation of images and imagined histories of Indigenous peoples in relation to the 'rest' of Canada, see Daniel Francis, 1992.

significantly between earth and sky, and yet the human being is not put forth as being somehow above the rest of creation. The Indigenous acceptance of difference between human beings and other beings without the attribution of an attending hierarchy of value to these varying positions of beings reflects back to the significance of this placement/location of humans within the greater structure of the world. The ceremonies from within the Plains world reflect a consciousness of life lived within a sacred circle. The Sun Dance as the most commonly known ceremony or event reflecting a sense of shared or collective identity displays a consciousness of the circle as the principle that underlies all life, and of the Sun as the mandala of that model and form of consciousness.

In the rest of this focus on consciousness and identity from a Plains perspective, I will refer to the two texts. Black Elk is introduced by Neihardt as "a wichasha wakon (holy man, priest) – and he had been of some importance in the Messiah affair" (Neihardt, 1932, p. x). At the time that Neihardt was being given his life story, Black Elk was an old man living on the Pine Ridge Reservation of South Dakota. He had been a great healer and visionary, helping his people and driven to find a way to the fulfillment of the vision he had had given to him when he was nine years old. This vision had taken him to several countries in Europe in the hope that he might stem the tide of destruction that he was seeing as his people withered away in the face of the onslaught of the wasichus and their soldiers. He did not know even to the end of his story how it was that he was to fulfill the vision that he had received. In sharing his great vision to Neihardt, he was finishing his last actions and ensuring that his vision did not die with his death. "His chief purpose was to 'save his Great Vision for men'" (Neihardt, 1932, p.xii).

### *Black Elk Speaks about Wounded Knee*

Black Elk described the massacre of Big Foot and his people at Wounded Knee on December 29, 1890 from within the context of the Wanekia, "One Who Makes Live". Black Elk described what he heard on his return from "across the big water" (1889) (p.196) as the strange news from the Oglalas, then the Shoshones, and Blue Clouds (Arapahoes):

> This news said that out yonder in the west at a place where the great mountains (The Sierras) stand before you come to the big water, there was a sacred man

> among the Paiutes who had talked tot he Great Spirit in a vision, and the Great Spirit had told him how to save the Indian peoples and make the Wasichus disappear and bring back all the bison and the people who were dead and how there would be a new earth. (p.197)

He himself did not at first believe in the power of the dancing that the sacred man taught the people to do, but he was reminded of his own vision and the power that he had been given to help his people "get back on the good red road" (p.198). He wondered if perhaps his vision was connected to the vision that the Wanekia had. He said, "This was in my mind all winter" and "This was sitting in my mind every day, and it was a very bad winter, with much hunger and sickness" (p.198/99). The stories kept coming to Black Elk of the works and words of this Wanekia. Finally as the ghost dances were being held closer to home, he went to the ghost dance at Wounded Knee Creek. He said,

> I was surprised, and could hardly believe what I saw; because so much of my vision seemed to be in it....It all seemed to be from my great vision somehow and I had done nothing yet to make the tree (of life) to bloom....Great happiness overcame me, and it all took hold of me right there. This was to remind me to get to work at once and help bring my people back into the sacred hoop, that they might walk again the red road in a sacred manner pleasing to the Powers of the Universe that are One Power. (p.201)

Black Elk danced the ghost dance from then on, receiving and sharing visions that he received and making the holy shirts as he had been told in the first vision. By the late summer of 1890, two of his people were detained by the Wasichus in prison at Pine Ridge Agency as they returned from visiting the Wanekia. Other groups in the area received visits from the agent who told them to stop dancing. To Black Elk, "This showed the Wasichus were afraid of something". "Word came to us that the Indians were beginning to dance everywhere" (211).

In the midst of this time, the "people were hungry and in despair, and many believed in the good new world that was coming". "The Wasichus gave us less than half the beef cattle they promised us in the treaty, and these cattle were very poor". "So we got more lies than cattle, and we could not eat lies. When the agent told the people to quit dancing, their hearts were bad" (212).

The personal anguish of Black Elk as visionary is expressed in the way he looked back on the events of Wounded Knee as connected to a "great mistake" in his interpretation of the visions he had received. As an old man talking to Neihardt, Black Elk recalls:

"I have thought much about this since, and I have thought that this was where I made my great mistake. I had had a great vision, and I should have depended only upon that to guide me to the good. But I followed the lesser visions that had come to me while dancing at Wounded Knee Creek." "I did not depend upon the great vision as I should have done; I depended upon the two sticks that I had seen in the lesser vision. It is hard to follow one great vision in this world of darkness and of many changing shadows. Among those shadows men get lost" (213).

From this point of recollection, Black Elk recounts the events leading up to and after Wounded Knee and the massacre of Big Foot and his people. Sitting Bull had been killed and some of his people had fled and joined with Big Foot coming down from the badlands because he and his people were starving and freezing. The band numbered "nearly four hundred people" with "about a hundred warriors"(215). The soldiers met them, they surrendered and went along with the soldiers to camp at Wounded Knee Creek.

Black Elk was in Pine Ridge when he heard this news and saw soldiers leave for Wounded Knee. "These made about five hundred soldiers that were there the next morning. When I saw then starting I felt something terrible was going to happen. That night I could hardly sleep at all. I walked around most of the night" (217). The next morning, Black Elk, in a group of about twenty warriors, responded to the sound of gunfire and the reports of two incoming riders that the people who had been coming in to Pine Ridge (Big Foot's band) had been "murdered" (218). When they arrived on the scene, they came in from a direction that permitted them to save a few women and children who were "huddled under a clay bank, and some cavalryman were there pointing guns at them" (219). They chased the soldiers back towards the main site, by now having been joined by other Lakotas from Pine Ridge. They could not drive the soldiers from their shelter and in the evening, the soldiers marched up Wounded Knee Creek, leaving the Lakotas to deal with the dead.

That night the "snow drifted deep in the crooked gulch, and it was one long grave of butchered women and children and babies, who had never done any harm and were only trying to run away" (p.223). Black Elk reported the story as he heard it from his friend Dog Chief, who had been standing "right there by Yellow Bird when it happened." The soldiers had begun taking away the guns form the Big Foots and Yellow Bird would not let go of his gun.

> He wrestles with the officer, and while they were wrestling, the gun went off and killed the officer. Wasicus and some others have said he meant to do this, but Dog Chief was standing right there, and he told me it was not so. As soon as the gun went off, Dog Chief told me, an officer shot and killed Big Foot who was lying sick inside the tepee. (222)
>
> The women and children ran up into the gulch and up west, dropping all the time, for the soldiers shot them as they ran. (222)

When Black Elk had headed up towards Wounded Knee, he had carried only his sacred bow, not wanting to kill anybody because of his experiences with the Wanekia religion.

But now he wanted revenge and he wanted to kill. He and the other Lakota men fought for a while and wanted to continue the fight, but Red Cloud convinced them to go into the Agency because the women and children were starving and freezing.

"And so it was all over." (230)

In all of this, the message that sits starkly across the pages of Black Elk's story, no matter who was recording, is that the dancing was the source of the army and government's fears, and that women and children were gunned down in cold-blooded murder with no reprisals or restitution ever having been considered up to the present. However, this was not the energy and drive of consciousness for Black Elk. These were matters of human survival and security for the people.

The driving force for Black Elk was his visions and his experiences that evolved or flowed from the presence of these visions in his life and in the lives of his people as he enacted them. The visions were his guide, without them life had no sense of order or happiness. But with them is the need to understand, interpret and "see" them. His absolute despair when he is not able to see where and how the vision fits into the events of the everyday world of his people is disturbing even to me as reader. The energy that

flowed from his great vision and filled his being seems to have died with those women, children and men at Wounded Knee.

Yet, in the way that his words live on and speak to Indigenous persons like me, his vision is not dead. What he experienced in the "many changing shadows" between visions and daily events is the challenge of every visionary, and for many Indigenous people for whom the visionary experience is an important part of life, his words are tremendously meaningful and hopeful.

Black Elk was a Plains Indian with a consciousness of the circle as the expression of the "Power of the World" (164).

> Everything the Power of the World does is done in a circle. The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moved. Our tepees were round like the nests of birds, and these were always set in a circle, the nation's hoop, a nest of many nests, where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children. (165)

Black Elk's vision was centred on the flowering tree as the "living center" of the nation's hoop, with the "circle of the four quarters" nourishing it. All "our power came to us from the sacred hoop of the nation, and so long as the hoop was unbroken, the people flourished" (p.164). Because Black Elk could no longer "see" his vision, and could no longer see the living tree at the center of the hoop, it is easy to understand that part of his personal death in the collective death of his people at Wounded Knee.

The timeline that is represented in the narration of Black Elk is approximately 70 years, between 1863 and 1932. From the events at Wounded Knee in 1890 to his prayer at Harney Peak, Black Elk displayed himself as a person who expressed his identity and his consciousness of the world as he described it to be. In the 42 years of living on the Pine Ridge Reserve being "penned up" and "in square boxes", Black Elk had not become a different being. He describes this time in relation to the power of the circle, of the nation's hoop: "Our power is gone and we are dying, for the power is not in us anymore" (p.166).

His words are despairing yet the integrity of his visions and his response to his visions has been and remains constant throughout the text. At Harney Peak, where the narrative ends, the final episode is described in the author's postscript: "It was a season of drouth, one of the worst in the memory of the old men. The sky remained clear until about the conclusion of the ceremony" (p.232). At that point, during the prayer of Black Elk, the assembled group noted that "thin clouds had gathered" and a "scant rain" was drizzling down on the old man's uplifted face as he concluded his prayer, with "low, muttering thunder without lightening" (p.233):

> *In sorrow I am sending a feeble voice, O Six Powers of the World. Hear me in my sorrow, for I may never call again. O make my people live. (P.233/34)*
> *James Mooney Speaks on Wounded Knee*

Sometimes a the expression of a person's identity or form of consciousness becomes more recognizable as such when it is viewed in relation to the expression of identity and consciousness of another person. The following section is a description of the Wounded Knee massacre as the information was gathered and interpreted into the historical record from the pages of James Mooney, an "illustrious" ethnologist who "contributed to American Indian studies substantial and irreplaceable reports on the culture of the Cherokee and Kiowa, on the population of tribal groups in North America at first contact, and – most importantly – on the Ghost dance" (Edit. Wallace, 1965, p. v). The title of the work is The Ghost Dance Religion with the subtitle of The Sioux Outbreak of 1890.

I will focus only on that section of his book that parallels the narrative of Black Elk. According to Mooney, the Oglala Sioux first heard of the ' messiah' in 1889, and the first Ghost dances were held near Pine Ridge in the Spring of 1890 (Wallace, p.65). The sequence of events in the reception and adoption of the ghost dance by the Oglala Sioux is almost exactly that provided by Black Elk. Mooney introduces the Ghost Dance as a religious movement amongst certain groups, including the Sioux, Shoshoni and Arapahoes. However, the parallels start to move apart when he shifts into a discussion of the causes of the "Sioux Outbreak".

Mooney refers to a compendium of documents where "these causes are fully set forth by competent authorities – civilian, military, missionary, and Indian" (p.69). The causes are "summarized as (1) unrest of the conservative element under the decay of the old life, (2)

repeated neglect of promises made by the government, and (3) hunger" (p.69). The documentation that he attaches as appendices to his work are strongly indicative of criticism directed at the government for not adhering to the promises made in the treaties that the Indians had been "forced" to sign. Mooney himself never uses or suggests that coercion of any sort was used in the signing of the three treaties that progressively cut the Sioux territory or "reserve" into smaller and smaller portions until they were in the end almost totally dependent wards of an unresponsive government.

However, officials such as General Miles, writing from Rapid City, South Dakota on December 19, 1890 just prior to the Wounded Knee massacre, wrote to Senator Dawes in Washington, informing him that "the Indians were urged and almost forced to sign a treaty presented to them by the commission authorized by Congress" and that Congress "could, if it were disposed, in a few hours confirm the treaties that its commissioners have made with these Indians" and "give an earnest of their good faith or intention to fulfill their part of the compact" (Wallace, 1965,p.81). Of course, Miles also offered that if the President was authorized to place all "the turbulent and dangerous tribes of Indians" under military control, they could "subjugate, and govern" those Indians to self-sustainability (p.81).

Captain Hurst, writing from Fort Bennet, South Dakota on January 9, 1891, just days after the Wounded Knee massacre has a different take on the situation, referring to the "standing list of grievances" (p.81) as coming from two types of Indians. His description begins with the one type as:

> ...those least willing to help in bettering their condition, and who are opposed to any change or improvement of their old habits and customs, and oppose all progress. Of this class I cite Big Foot's band of irreconcilables – who have now ceased to complain – and those in accord with them. Except in the matter of short rations, the story of their wrongs needs no attention. It commences with a recital of the wrong done them by the white race sharing the earth with them. The other class, comprising a large majority of Indians of the reservation, have accepted the situation forced upon them, and have been for years bravely struggling in the effort to reconcile themselves to the ways of civilization and moral progress, with a gratifying degree of success. It is this class whose complaints and grievances demand considerate attention. (p. 82)

A statement from Bishop Hare, Episcopal missionary amongst the Sioux, in a communication dated January 7, 1891 also is clear that "among the Pine Ridge Indians at

least, hunger has been an important element in the causes of discontent and insubordination" (p.85). A few other comments from his communiqué are worth citing in light of my communiqué. Mooney's description of the 1876 treaty was based on the discovery of gold in the Black Hills within the reservation.

> At once thousands of miners and other thousands of lawless desperadoes rushed into the country in defiance of the protests of the Indians and the pledges of the government, and the Sioux saw their last remaining hunting ground taken from them. The result was the Custer war and massacre, and anew agreement in 1876 by which the Sioux were shorn of one third of their guaranteed reservation, including the Black Hills, and this led to deep and widespread dissatisfaction amongst the tribe. (p.70)

He gives a brief account of the 1889 treaty where again the Sioux were "were called on to surrender more territory" and ended up surrendering one half of their remaining territory (p.71). Bishop Hare's perspective was somewhat different. He says,

> The time seemed now to have come to take a further step and divide the Great Sioux reservation up into separate reserves for each important tribe, and to open the surplus land to settlement. The needs of the white population, with their business and railroads, and the welfare of the Indians, seemed alike to demand this. (p.85)

The responses of the Indians to the treaty commission were many "objections" based on the losses of their old way of life because "schools and churches were sapping and undermining it" (p.86) and a general distrust at old promises and obligations not being fulfilled. Hare seems quite confident to describe the trials of 'dealing' with Indians and other like persons:

> The Indians have no competent representative body. The commissioners had to treat at each agency with a crowd, a crowd composed of full-bloods, half-breeds, and squaw men, a crowd among who all sorts of sinister influences and brute forces were at work. Commissioners with such a business in hand have the devil to fight, and can fight him, so it often seems, only with fire, and many friends of the Indians think that in this case the commission, convinced that the acceptance of the bill was essential, carried persuasion to the verge of intimidation. I do not blame them if they sometimes did. The wit and patience of an angel would fail often in such a task. (p.86)

He details the hardships that the Indians had to deal with following the signing of this treaty – the loss of their land and the starvation and illness during a bitterly cold winter. Then he says, "no doubt the people could have saved themselves from suffering if

industry, economy, and thrift had abounded: but these are just the virtues which a people merging from barbarism lack" (p.86). Money's assessment is straightforward, and in keeping with that of general Miles:

> Thousands of white settlers after years of successive failures had given up the struggle and left the country, but the Indians, confined to reservations, were unable to emigrate, and were also as a rule unable to find employment ... The buffalo were gone. They must depend on their cattle, their crops, and the government rations issued in return for the lands they surrendered. If these failed, they must starve. The highest officials concur in the statement that all of these did fail, and that the Indians were driven to outbreak by starvation. (p.71)

In Hare's appraisal of the situation leading up to the coming messiah, "new ways were prevailing more and more which did not suit the older people. The older ways which they loved were passing away. In a word, all things were against them, and to add to the calamity, many Indians, especially the wilder element, had nothing to do but to brood over their misfortunes" (p.87).

Mooney in his discussion of the causes of the "Sioux outbreak of 1890", presented some clear perspectives from a variety of sources on civilian and military opinions about Sioux identity and consciousness. In his own opinions we can see the same perspectives and beliefs about the Indians as were displayed in the reports from which he drew his information. Mooney along with the people he used as 'expert witnesses' displayed a total lack of awareness of their own savagery and lack of civility when it came to human relationships of integrity and honour. His attempts to indicate compassion or understanding clearly show the parameters of his world and its values:

About the dissatisfaction of the Sioux after the loss of the Black Hills in 1876, he said:

"It took our own Aryan ancestors untold centuries to develop from savagery into civilization. Was it reasonable to expect that the Sioux could do the same in fourteen years?"(p.70).

After the killing of Sitting Bull, Mooney said about him,

> However misguided he may have been in thus continuing a losing fight against the inevitable, it is possible that from the Indian point of view he may have been their patriot as he was their high priest". "But he represented the past. His influence was incompatible with progress, and his death marks an era in the civilization of the Sioux. (p.108)

Mooney expressed clearly his opinion that the Ghost dance itself was "only a symptom and expression of the real causes of dissatisfaction", and with the right man in charge at Pine Ridge, "there would have been no outbreak" (p.73). He says that the "Sioux outbreak of 1890 was due entirely to local grievances, recent or longstanding" and that "remedy and preventive for similar trouble" could be found in his appended statement of "competent authorities" (p.73).

The "competent authorities" included Hurst, a man who could make a mockery of the massacre of women and children at Wounded Knee ("who have now ceased to complain" p.81) and Hale who could rationalize every sort of government and 'white' injustice by seeing the Indians not as persons, as one might logically expect from his Christian calling, but as "full-bloods, half-breeds, and squaw men", full of "sinister influences and brute forces" against whom all good Christians and treaty commissioners must stand, we are to suppose (p.86).

The one authoritative statement that is significant in the collection Mooney offers is that of Dr. McGillycuddy (Ex-Agent to Pine Ridge) dated January 15, 1891 to General Colby, commanding Nebraska state troops during the outbreak. In this letter, two sections are important to this discussion. In the first paragraph, McGillycuddy says "to no one cause can be attributed the so-called outbreak on the part of the Sioux" (my emphasis, p.76). And again, more clearly to the issue, in a post-script, he says,

> P.S. I neglected to state that up to date there has been neither a Sioux outbreak nor war. No citizen in Nebraska or Dakota has been killed, molested, or can show the scratch of a pin, and no property has been destroyed off the reservation. (p.78).

The message reflected here points back to the reason that I have included Mooney's work in the overarching discussion of identity and consciousness. Mooney is introduced as an exemplary scholar, yet he undermines any sense of integrity that he might have as a scholar by failing to recognize that his work on the ghost dance religion is not presented as scholarship; it is most clearly written in the context of state propaganda - an attempt to justify the massacre of over 200 women and children by 3,000 soldiers with four Hotchkiss guns.

It is obvious from the authorities that Mooney has cited that the Ghost Dance had little to do with the "so-called" outbreak; Mooney recognizes that himself. So as the work

unfolds, we "discover" that there were many forms of grievances over the years, and it is made logical and easy to understand and sympathize with the Indians for the "outbreak". When, however, we review the available data, which is considerable in even this one source, we notice that there is actually nothing in the records to indicate an "outbreak". As McGillycuddy said, and as was directly implied by Black Elk in the first person narrative of his experiences of the events leading up to, during and after the massacre of his people at Wounded Knee, there was never any "outbreak" of the Sioux against anyone. The slaying of innocents at Wounded Knee was unjustified mass murder. It was not a battle of war because there had been no "outbreak", no "uprising", no "rebellion" against the government. Whether or not that was intended, Mooney's inclusion of the massacre at Wounded Knee as part of this particular work on the Ghost Dance speaks loudly in support of an unspoken assertion that in some way the Ghost Dance was the cause of the massacre. The manner in which Mooney collapses his ethnology on the Ghost dance with the Sioux "outbreak of 1890" virtually drowns out his and all the other statements cited as evidence that the Ghost Dance was not a cause. Why then was the Ghost dance material included in what reads primarily as an investigative report of the "outbreak" of the Sioux "uprising"? The answer is provided in the introduction by the editor, F.C. Wallace. Here we find out that the interest by the Bureau of American Ethnology for whom Mooney worked was

> ...precipitated not by a policy of interest in nativistic movements but by the agitation aroused in the government and in the popular press concerning the possibility of an 'Indian Outbreak' among the Sioux. Mooney was dispatched to investigate this new, and threatening, religion among the Sioux – and other affected tribes – and to report his findings. (p.vii)

Wallace himself refers to the Ghost dance in relation to the Sioux in South Dakota as "the spark of the last Indian War" (p. vii). He attributes nativistic sentiments to Mooney that enable him "to take seriously" "the personal tragedy of the Indian men, women, and children who were killed and wounded by Army regulars at the battle of Wounded Knee" (p. vii). In other words, Wallace, in 1965, is saying quite plainly that the Massacre at Wounded Knee was a battle, that the Sioux were at war with the United States government, and that the ghost dance was a significant cause of their (the Sioux) "uprising".

With this analysis of the two works then, it appears as if Mooney was not really doing scholarship as his first objective. He was writing a report on a religion that supposedly threatened the "white" settlers and the government's control over "its" Indians, especially the Sioux. Although his report conclusions do not specifically mention the Ghost dance (p.119) as being in any way related to the Wounded Knee events, we are left hanging with too many disjunctions to feel that the issue has been resolved even to a place of logic. It had been proven intellectually that the Ghost dance was not related to the Wounded Knee events. The claim made by the government officials, agents and military that they were responding to a situation of war against the Sioux had no supporting evidence. The Sioux had not declared war nor an uprising nor an outbreak in any shape or form against anyone. Beyond these three indisputable facts, there are two other facts: the Sioux people were dancing against the orders of the government agents and more than two hundred women and children had been shot with Gatling or Hotchkiss guns and the wounded left in winter blizzard conditions for three days without any help.

The only point in the argument that stands out as being contestable in any way is the dancing. Here, we can go back to Black Elk. To the Sioux people, they were dancing and praying – it was a religious experience and an expression of individual identity and being. The teachings and the practice "fit" with the consciousness of the world as being more than this one earthly existence. The name "ghost dance" was hardly ever used by Black Elk because the dance was an expression of being, it was not a weapon or a political ploy or strategy or an uprising. When the government agents ordered the Sioux people to stop dancing, they did not. Mooney doesn't cite the reasons that they might have given for not stopping, and neither do we really know why they were told to stop. We are told however, through Black Elk, who was probably very active in the dancing because he was a visionary, that the people danced because "they believed in the good new world that was coming" (Neihardt, p.212). Black Elk danced because he could experience his power and visions during the dancing and the praying. None of the details that Black Elk provided about the dancing sounded even remotely threatening.

So what was the threat that the government perceived? The fact that the Indians weren't behaving as good children and listening or doing what they were told to do? Was it the notion of the inferior conquered having the impertinence to refuse an order? Was it the

audacity represented by a conquered people who dared to be happy and look forward to a better life with their own people after the Wasichus, the "Master", was gone? All of these point to consciousness and identity as expressed by the Sioux and the Wasichus in relationship to each other. The events are historical and yet they are being replayed every day in the same way that Black Elk stood and prayed on Harney's peak forty-two years later, re-living his vision, his dancing and his experiences with the dead at Wounded Knee.

Why Mooney continued to describe the situation as a Siouan "outbreak" or "uprising" throughout his work can only be attributed to the objectives as set forth by Wallace regarding the Bureau of American Ethnology. This view that contextualized an action of mass murder into an act of war permitted everyone involved to justify their own actions and rationalizations and avoid personal and state accountability for unjust and/or criminal actions against unprotected individuals and collectivities. This argument, that Wounded Knee was a battle in a war between the Sioux and the government of the United States, has been shown to be wholly unfounded, at least by the data made available by Mooney.

In a strange and perverted way, the Ghost dance was the cause in the sense that it precipitated a totally unreasonable and inhuman reaction from the agents, soldiers, and government officials when the Indians wouldn't stop dancing as they were being ordered to. The light needs to be intensified and magnified on these types of historical events in order to gain a better understanding of how expressions of consciousness and identity can be linked so insolubly across cultural lines, and the impacts on behaviour of the relationship between consciousness and its identity.

## The Trails of the Forest and Tundra

### *Introduction*

The northern or bush experience seems to have had no huge attraction for the European minds in terms of their cultures or their ways of life. Trapping, hunting, and fishing within the context of the Northern lifeworld were not the ways of life for most people of colonizing Europe. At the time of the fur traders and the 'explorers', the northern way of life was described and perceived as 'primitive' and 'savage' in the sense of uncivilized and as superstitious in beliefs and religious practices. There was no description that

recognized an Indigenous understanding of spirituality in any sense of the word as used by the Europeans.

For the Northern Woodlands or Bush cultures, "beings" were more hidden, and the meanings associated with them more esoteric. Individuals spent lifetimes learning these esoteric systems of knowledge and practices. Individual and group expression was tied to sparse forms of symbology, and simplicity in every form and aspect of life was very highly valued. Spiritual practices were individualistic in their focus with each person expected to pursue his/her own path of spirituality. There was little if any attention given to social hierarchies and status. However, recognition was given by the collective, the whole people, to individuals who had demonstrated their "credentials" earned in a specific area or field of study. High value was accorded to those skills and knowledge that brought benefits and well-being to the whole group.

In the following sections, I will refer to Maps and Dreams (Brody, 1981) as a good source of clues to my analysis and to contextualize my comments on the trails model of consciousness and identity formation. I will also refer briefly to The Orders of the Dreamed (Brown & Brightman,1988) and The Ojibway of Berens River, Manitoba (Hallowell, edit. Jennifer Brown 1992). All of these were excellent sources for their inspiration to organize, re-arrange or bring into focus my own repertoire of Indigenous experiences and knowledge. As well, these sources have already started on their own journeys to connect with other researchers who need to be inspired to dig deep and find good reasons to share their experiences and ways to access and create further experiences and new knowledge.

### *Trails and Maps, Dreams, Markers and Stories*

The Northern consciousness model was a trail. Markers were very important on the trail because they showed significant points in the journeys of human beings. In a symbolic way, they could be interpreted as markers for individual and group progress and movements as well as for personal and social development. These markers were tied very closely to nature, often situated at junctures or crossings of networks of trails, but they marked events as clearly as they marked geography. These events and trails were the outward expression of the spaces and forces at work within the natural wilderness and

within the lives of individuals and collectivity of the people. The markers served as indicators of human individual and group experiences in interaction and communion with other forces and beings of the natural wilderness. Specific concrete and natural or human-made markers showed the meaningful points on the trail of the life journeys for both individuals and groups. All markers were symbolic, speaking to multiple layers of meanings and as such open to multiple interpretations at as many levels.

Manitohkanak, a Cree word translated as "the objects embodying sacred power or spirit power; totem" (LeClaire & Cardinal, edit. Waugh, 1998) were a special type of "marker" along the trails of the Northern people. As sacred sites reserved for the expression of Indigenous spirituality, manitohkának were the churches and cathedrals of the Northern trails (B.Blesse/conversation 2002). An understanding of the manitohkanak as they related to Indigenous spiritual expression amongst the Cree and Metis people of Northern Alberta can point us further along the trail towards a better understanding of consciousness in this part of the Indigenous north. I initiated conversations with other people about their knowledge and experiences in relation to Manitohkanak. Through these discussions, we helped each other to articulate our own understanding of where these sacred "objects" and locations are today in relation to our own lives and identities.

In Maps and Dreams, Hugh Brody relates his experiences and the teachings he received from the people he lived and interacted with over a period of at least three years. He was a researcher doing a land-use and occupancy study as part of "a public inquiry into the social and economic consequences of the northern British Columbia frontier" (Brody, 1981, p. xvii). The people were concerned about the construction of the Alaska Highway natural gas pipeline and as a result of intensive work by the British Columbia Union of Indian Chiefs and "presentations by Chiefs and Councillors of seven of the northeast's Indian bands"; the study was funded by the Canadian government (Brody, 1981, p. xvii). Brody's focus was map-making but he led us through his days with careful descriptions and interpretations of his interactions with a specific group of "Indians". In responding to the questions for the map-making, they took him along with them through their own lives, helping him to see an economic system and a way of life inextricably linked.

One of the first narratives we are given is that one shared with Brody about the arrival of one particular group into the hunting territory that is to be mapped. Within that story, we are told how the new arrivals used dream prophecy and a "medicine cross" to confirm the potential of the new area to support them economically. Through a dream, one of the elders saw a moose cow come to the newly erected "medicine cross", circle its base and return in the direction she had come. Two days after this dream, the hunters

> ...discovered the tracks of a young cow moose, and, following these, recognized them to be the tracks of the dream animal. The tracks led to the cross, circled it, then returned to the Bluestone. The dream prediction had been auspiciously fulfilled. The new area would provide abundantly. (p.9)

On a hunt, Brody is taken to the cross and describes how it had rotted at its base and fallen back into the pines that surrounded it. He says "the clothing and bundles its arms had supported were long gone" and with the color of the wood now the same as the other deadfalls, the cross would likely be passed unnoticed, "so nearly did it merge with the woodland around"(p.107). Brody remembered that a road was being planned for this area and he imagined the cross being bulldozed into the deadfalls and brush beside the road, completely unnoticed.

This is probably a similar story of the Manitohkanak of Northern Alberta, but there is more to be told here, and I would strongly suspect more to be told there as well. From the personal writings of a missionary priest to the Cree people, an English translation refers to a Manitohkan as "the image of a spirit"[26]. He also said that "certain missionaries, on the basis of superficial impressions, destroyed with curses that which they too hastily labelled 'false gods', without knowing exactly what they were destroying". He describes the location of the first Manitohkan that he encountered as standing at the foot of an enormous fir tree, where the guide on the trip "claimed to know nothing" about 'this odd post". From an older person willing to share the information, the missionary learned that "The Manitohkan is an exterior sign recalling the invisible presence and universal reign of the Supreme Being". "The offerings are presented, not to his lifeless post, but to God represented by this post". The materials left as offerings can

---

[26] This information was translated for my personal use because the text is unavailable in English. At the specific request of the author, the work is not to be translated into English.

be used through a system of exchanges whereby people who stop to pray and make their own offerings are welcome to help themselves to some needed item that was offered by someone who stopped earlier. "Each carries within his heart a deep gratitude, and, at the first opportunity, will go and leave his fair share".

I first heard of the Manitohkan from my father. During his experiences in the bush as a trapper, he had stopped at these sites with travelling partners who would make offerings and prayers. He explained the Manitohkanak to me in similar terms as everyone else. There are persons today who know the locations of old Manitohkanak rotting away and no longer being used. Through discussions over the years, I concluded that many Cree/Metis persons did not know what the word Manitohkanak referred to. However, I also concluded based on my own growing understanding that the Manitohkanak served an important purpose to our people and that that purpose would likely still be present with us.

Over the years of research and discussion with other Cree and Metis people, I have arrived at a deeper and more contemporary understanding of the Manitohkanak. People went to these sites/locations to understand and to be able to prepare themselves to protect the earth. The Sacred Power had created us from the Earth but we didn't know how to communicate with the Creator. There was a need then for the Creator to find a way to communicate with, to show the love and compassion that is present for us. One way is through dreams and visions. But humans also need the means to communicate with the Sacred Power and so we were given these openings, these special places as the means. The Creator formed everything and it is up to us to find these means, these openings to the Creator. When we are in balance, attuned with the Earth, we recognize these openings and means. The Earth helps us by sending up or putting forth certain noticeable signs that mark these special places that the Creator had put there for us. In the past, when we found these spots, we would set up a Manitohkan to mark the site for others to also stop and make their offerings and prayers to the Sacred Power or Creator. Often these spots are the actual objects themselves, such as a specially formed or marked tree or a special rock. The tree or the rock is alive and it has agreed to grow or be at the site that the Earth has chosen. This choice was made in order to mark this holy spot for her children, us.

Today, because we are still the same kind of people, we still have to be attuned to the Earth in order to locate these special places or sacred spots. Some of my colleagues believe that there are actually more places now that there used to be in the past. This thinking is based on changes in the actual ways that we move around. The way we live today is very different from the past where the trails in the bush and the means of transportation were such that the Manitohkanak represented occasions to rest as well as to think, make offerings and express gratitude and prayers to the Sacred Power. The lives of the bush people were lived in relation to the trails of their daily physical lives, and so the expression of what was sacred and meaningful in life was also found along the trails. It was here that knowledge, understanding and wisdom took shape in the long hours of inner silence and human aloneness in absolute attunement with life. The Manitohkanak were places of gratitude because that is what life is.

Today we are literally travelling faster, and when we find a sacred location, we have no time to stop and make a Manitohkan any more. We are not travelling on foot or by dogteam or even horses. However, even as we live with a sense of "fighting" time, we still pray in those places as we encounter them. Even the selection of an appropriate spot for a sweatlodge can suggest that the sweatlodge itself is a sort of Manitohkan. Essentially the reasons that we don't have Manitohkanak around us in visible forms that are similar to those of the past are based on the constraints placed on us by our physical environment (L.Cunningham/conversation,2003).

People today respond as they have always done to the sacred places they encounter. As has always been characteristic of the northern Cree and Metis, each person is expected to discover a personal life of prayer and expression of individual spirituality. People want internal peace and have their own ways of finding it. Some of the traditional ways where the whole group came together in spiritual ceremonies are still practiced, but the individual finds his/her own path for individual expression of spirituality. Where the teachings have not been handed down and people do not have the opportunity to come together in traditional ceremonies of the community/collective, individuals and communities find their own ways because they are driven by their own spirits to make the same connectedness as their ancestors did with the creative Sacred Power, the Earth, and all life.

From other stories that Brody is given, we learn about how some "old-timers" had been famous for their powers and skills as hunters and dreamers. They hunted through their dreams. "they located their prey in dreams, found their trails, and made dream-kills" (p.44). Sometimes as one story is given these hunters would mark their animals in the dream so that they could recognize the animal when it was killed in the forthcoming hunt (p.45). These stories and experiences that directly connect ordinary daily activities and events with knowledge gained through dreams are especially common amongst the far northern peoples such as the Dogrib of Fort Rae (Helm, 1994, p.102/03), the Dene'Tha of (Goulet, 1998), Cree and Metis of Northern Alberta.

Hallowel (1992) gives a good example of a dream that led an Ojibwa individual to his medicine. "Yellow Legs dreamed of a large round stone on Egg Island" (p.12) and he sent two men to get it for him. He told them to follow some bear tracks and then to bring the stone that had a few branches broken directly above it. They found the stone according to those directions and brought it back. It had animate properties and would "open" a mouth so that Yellow Legs could extract a packet of medicine for everyone present. The sons of Yellow Legs carried on the ceremonies at Berens River in Northern Manitoba and William Berens who worked with Hallowell in his research last saw that particular "performance" as a child. The stone came into the possession of William Berens but it "no longer manifested any animate properties" (p.12). Hallowell commented that William himself had also dreamed as had his grandfather Yellow Legs of the memengweciwak who were reported to have given Yellow Legs his medicine.

Hallowell's book also includes a picture (1932) of a smoothly rounded boulder which was "revealed in a dream to a man who had placed it there" (p.58) on the portage between Poplar Narrows and Pikangikum, Berens River. The rock is referred to as "our grandfather's rock" and is considered sacred; it is surrounded by offerings of tobacco and other objects left by passers-by. In other words, it is a Manitohkan.

Cree and Metis people talk about dreaming as an important means of acquiring knowledge and experience. Dreams are understood and integrated into individual lives as experiences. An individual is expected to know which dreams are especially significant and also how to act upon the dreams that are given or come to him/her. It is perfectly

appropriate to seek advice and direction from persons who are capable of serving in that capacity, and all actions are accepted as being entirely the responsibility and therefore reside totally within the judgment of the individual. In my experience, there are very few people who have a Cree or Metis background who are not actively aware of the significance of the sacred, of prayer and dreams and visions in their daily lives. In other words, there is always an awareness even from childhood that we live our lives immersed in more than one reality and that there are particular ways to access the knowledge associated with those other realities. Dreaming is one of those ways.

A trapper or any other person who knows the bush knows because and through a deep and lengthy intimate relationship. The trails on the land are as familiar as the lines on a lover's face. The trails are a part of individual identity, and over time they become the shape of the individual's consciousness. The trails are etched over the face of the land as it undulates gently under the feet of the people and the animals, moving slowly and inexorably through time and space. The trails are old, being transformed imperceptibly but surely. Patterns of animal movements shift in response to events of the environment: a flood driving the movement to higher ridges, the departure to more favourable areas during a drought, beaver dams, wind storms, forest fires, disease, cycles of famine and prosperity affecting all life and transforming the trails, the lines on beloved and familiar features. The consciousness of the trails and woodlands peoples is the journeying towards the experiences of seeing and connecting, and these are the guiding forces of our movements.

The efficacy of dreams is described by the men who talked to Brody in terms of trails. They said this was a power that the old men had and "knew how to use" (p.45). The "trails converge, and if you are a very strong dreamer, you could discover this" (p.45) and see the source of both animals and trails. Good men could dream and see heaven and the trails of heaven. These good men "worked hard on their truth" (p.45). "We all have need of the trail, or a complex of trails, but unlike other important trails, the way to heaven will have been seen in dreams by only a few, special individuals" (p.47).

> How does anyone who has not dreamed the whole route begin to locate himself on such a map? When Joseph... began to draw a hunting map, he had first to find his way. He did this by recognizing features, by fixing points of reference, and

> then, once he was oriented to the familiar and to the scale or manner in which the familiar was reproduced, he could begin to add his own layers of detailed information. (p.47)
>
> heaven is to one side of, and at the same level as, the point where the trails to animals meet. Many men know ...this point, or ...its approach trails, from their own hunting dreams. Hunters can in this way find a basic reference. (p.47)

Some old-timers are "given a corner of a map (of heaven) that will reveal the trail to them" when they are buried (p.47).

These selections of text evoke fractal images and patternings where the trails on the land are one set of self-similar scale-invariant patterns that repeat themselves or are repeated in the total consciousness, including thinking patterns and behaviours, of the hunter or trapper. The bringing to consciousness of these patterns based on trails in our lives is as subtle and complex an exercise as it is to "see" a fractal patterning from a mental perspective. It is logical then that ceremonies and practices whose objectives are to "see" through time and space, "see" through the forest and bush, in other words, of our minds as well as our physical reality would be crucial for survival at all levels of being and complexity.

The Wihkohkewin and the Kosapahcikewin lead us out of the closeness of the forest and into the clearings to "see" and understand. In both, we seek the capacity to experience self and knowledge beyond the limitations of the mental capacity for thought and without the confinement that is inherent to the physicality and mentality of human life. Ceremonies (daily, seasonal, or driven by events) are the means that enable us to reach other states of being where we can realize these experiences. Without reaching or entering into these other states of being, these experiences and that knowledge are closed to us.

The Kosapahcikewin is an ancient ceremony, variation kosapahtamowin with translation in the Cree dictionary (edit. Waugh, 1998) as " the act of practicing spiritual rites". Kosapahcikan refers to the "tent in the shaking tent ceremony" (Waugh, 1998). In both of these definitions/translations, I would include an additional meaning of seeing through something i.e. a shaking tent for seeing through. The Kosapahcikewin is described in detail in both Brown & Brightman (1988) and Hallowell (edit. Brown, 1992) as

significant to the Northern Cree and the Ojibwa. Both use the term "shaking tent" ceremony supposedly because of the literal shaking of the enclosure where the "other-than-human persons" (Hallowell) enter in response to the request of the individual doing the ceremony. Brown & Brightman, in a footnote, provide a half page of references to works on the "shaking tent" ceremony amongst fourteen different groups of Indigenous peoples. She says these references are to be added to the "nearly exhaustive compendium of comparative material" that Hallowell had included in his monograph (1942), the monograph that served as the foundation text for her work in The Orders of the Dreamed (1988, p.146). Information then is readily available on this particular ceremony. What is not readily available are the perspectives from Indigenous people whose families depended on such practices and gifts in order to access certain types of information that would otherwise not be available. Such perspectives are important to my thinking because these ceremonies point directly back to certain forms of consciousness and identity that in their turn are directly connected to the predominant images that evolve from the different forms of interaction governing and shaping the dynamics within the interface of the people and the land.

The stories Atayohkewina that are discussed in Brown and Brightman (1988), Hallowell (1992), and Helm (1994) are stories that belong to peoples. They are interesting but lifeless left in textbooks, or placed in other texts. They can be useful and inspiring when they are "shared" in appropriate and respectful ways, or their meanings and connections to lifeworlds can be disrespected and "lost". Without the stories, where are we as a people? I have heard the elders ask that. For the bush people, the trails consciousness is a relationship with all and a connection with all. Brody's re-telling of the people's words say that: The trails connect with each other and all have one source. It is up to us to find our own reference point to that source; then we can draw and use the map.

The wise ones and the scholars of every people always listen in anticipation to the thinking of wise ones and scholars from other peoples. In that light, I have appreciated and tried to use these sources in discussions with scholars of Cree and Metis communities in Northern Alberta.

The land itself is a map where the trapper and hunter, the bush person, can locate individual and shared history. Location is important because land is in actuality the text that serves as the historical record of events in the life of an individual or a people. The sites along a rail and the trail itself are living records, like mnemonic devices, triggering memories of the past. These sites however are more than static records and they have more than didactic purposes for the people. They are living records in that they will be transformed by the people themselves according to the needs of the people themselves. Over time, as the people and the land are transformed in the continuous and dynamic shaping and re-shaping of their relationships, often in the context of severe and detrimental impacts on Indigenous lifeworlds from outside "developers", these records will themselves be changed and transformed that they may speak to the people in ways that are sustaining of life.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: BRINGING THE THREADS TOGETHER

### Images of Indians

European thinking has historically been confident of its understanding of Indigenous thought and being. European thinking has tended to foster the belief that European understanding is primarily, if not solely, the result of intellectual endeavor and a naturally superior capacity for thought. (Francis, 1997). Further, it has consistently held to the belief that "Indians" are on their way to extinction in the face of a superior civilization (Francis, 1997). At one time in the Americas, it was appropriate to describe the White world as "a naturally superior civilization", but over the years, this statement has been modified, moving now to more subtle claims through the use of more specifically descriptive references such as "technological advancement and superiority", or "political power and international influence as a military force". In essence of meaning, there is very little difference between the 1800's social definition of Indians and the present definition: Generally, "Indians were defined in relation to the past and in contradistinction to White society. To the degree that they changed, they were perceived to be less Indian... They were fixed in a traditional mode and could not change without becoming something else, something not Indian" (Francis 1997, p.59). The only safe and acceptable way to 'see' Indians was as traditional and therefore of the past, and as assimilated and therefore no longer Indian.

Francis talks about the photography of Edward Curtis and how Curtis would doctor up his photos to show a particular image of an Indian, an image that he promoted very successfully to the ignorant public of the "vanishing Indian" (Francis, p.41). This reminds me of an incident at a tiny and remote community where my family lived for a while.

My daughter was about four years old, and played all day with the other children of the community. The steep grassy hills flowing down to the lake and the open wagon road and walking trails were of course equally open to them as play areas. All adults watched over them so they were well cared for. An anthropologist came to town and wandered easily throughout the community on a daily basis, always with his camera unshielded and ready. I don't recall even wondering what he was doing; I certainly didn't ask anyone.

One day, my daughter came home rather upset. She told me tearfully how the man had asked the children if he could take some pictures of them as they played on the hillside. Then she told me how he had moved her away from her friends so she would not be in the picture. She didn't understand what was happening. She didn't understand that the spirit of Edward Curtis was still alive and active. The anthropologist wanted to create a certain image for his public and my daughter didn't fit that image. She was too "light" to be an "Indian" and so she couldn't be in the picture. Somewhere there was a public who didn't want to see her in this community, it destroyed the image they wanted to hold and support. In this community, the Indians were to be "seen" living as they did in the past, pristine and uncontaminated by "whiteness". Contrast this to the many occasions when the grandmas held the babies close, kissing velvety cheeks and murmuring delightedly, 'Wapiskhsew" ["s/he's light" (skinned)]. What shared understanding was this to convey? That to be "light-skinned" was a good thing – a thing of beauty? It seemed so, and the lightness implied an easier life for the child, an important thing for any grandmother with a loving heart. Who indeed has not been touched by the image-makers?

**Perspectives on Personal Location Theory**

I grew up in a happy and beautiful place, loving and loved by the world I knew. The order of my world was clear and clean. As I went back to that time this morning in preparation for this final piece of writing, I saw my own growth in awareness as colourings seeping through the leaves of a tree, every unit of time matched by a change in the coloring, and every change of colour matched by a transformation in the tree itself; every change influenced by every raindrop, every shaft of sunlight, every breeze, every touch of another being, every dream, every word spoken, every thought.

I returned to an explanation of chaos theory that speaks, in muffled tones and shrouded in shadows but speaks nonetheless, to what I have come to understand as consciousness and its partner concept, identity. This explanation by John Van Eenwyk (MacCormac & Stamenov, 1996, p.330-335) provided me with images and clues to my own efforts to articulate this understanding based on personal experiences as a Metis person immersed in a lifeworld composed of Metis and Cree ways. I experience myself as an individual being with many aspects of being and I image myself as composed of thousands of beautiful leaves. To combine Eenwyk's words with my meaning, I am a body of

dynamics that can be described as *deterministic* chaos where patterns periodically appear and disappear. Each leaf is also a similar body of dynamics. The complexity of relationships between these dynamic systems is compounded with the effects of "sensitive dependence on initial conditions" or SDIC, a defining characteristic of chaotic dynamics referring to the extreme divergence of dynamics that begin in similar places. As an example, the beautiful "butterfly effect" used to depict SDIC in weather patterns (Pool 1989, cited in Van Eenwyk, 1996, p.331) proposes that "the weather in, say, Chicago can be altered by as minor an influence as a butterfly fluttering its wings in Beijing the week before" (p.131). Van Eenwyk extends the application of iteration and SDIC to the external manifestations of consciousness, human behaviour patterns. I am suggesting, in addition to this, a further extension of the application into an analysis of sophisticated knowledge systems that were directed towards the evolution of a particular model of consciousness itself with its attendant processes of identity formation.

While chaos theory has needed the opposite concept of *entropic* chaos which never resolves into patterns in order to be consistent in its reflection of the 'external' and scientifically measurable world, "what was once defined as entropic chaos now turns out to be deterministic" and the significant realization of the scientific community is that "our inability to analyze its dynamics limited our ability to recognize it" (P.330). Eenwyk credits the realization that entropic chaos was in fact deterministic chaos to high-speed computers that can diagram/graph the dynamics of systems.

It is not to insult the scientists who have made evident the accuracy and validity of the ancient teachings of Indigenous peoples and scholars that I point out that the consciousness of bush people has been at this stage of consciousness evolution for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Their systems of knowledge acquisition have been highly developed by their scholars and aimed at teaching systems for their people that developed and sustained moral order at the same time as they encompassed the logical transformations within individuals and groups immersed in relationships of interconnectivity and interacting with lifeworld events. The whole intention of knowledge and teaching was the sustenance of life in all its forms. The basis of this intention was a consciousness that was in its turn based on experiences of the dynamical interconnectedness of life itself.

These experiences were gained through the ceremonies and practices that were, up to the last century for some and the last half century for others, a part of the life of every individual. According to our teachers, the impacts and learnings of and from these experiences are still within our cellular memory and need only to be brought forward again through our own intentions and effort in order to be active and visible again in our daily lives.

At the same time, these ceremonies and practices, to a large extent, have been described in the texts of Western writings as interesting and exotic phenomena. Often, their content and their authors have been highly challenged and criticized by Indigenous people from many perspectives; I have made my own contributions in this regard. However, for many readers, these descriptions have captured the fantasy as well as the philosophical and scholarly imagination. In a very significant way, these writings can be an invaluable resource for Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars who recognize the need to embed solutions to the tremendous social issues facing Indigenous populations over the whole planet within the models of consciousness that lie hidden but are depicted within these descriptive texts. The author's interpretations as reflected within these texts are valuable for a different reason, and in meaningful partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars their value could become evident.

**Nationhood as a Model of Consciousness**

Canada makes agreements with separate Indigenous peoples. However, Canada is not making an agreement based on what is good for Canadians as peoples and cultures, nor on what is good for Indigenous peoples and cultures. Canada is making agreements based on principles and values that are in fact antithetical to beings, to humans, to people. Canada is making agreements based on what is good for a political entity, for the *nation*. True, it is persons who make decisions and write the documents, but it is the principles and values inscribed in policies that determine the contents of these decisions and agreements. When the leaders of a political system, even a democratic political system, believe that they can leave individual and therefore personal values and principles at home while they make governing decisions, the trickster is at it again. Recall the story of raven eating his shit?

How is it that when we draw the comparative parallels between what is white and what is native, we seem to be accepting that White people are more systematic and bureaucratic in their decision-making, more linear, less personal, less spiritually oriented? Aren't we then actually saying that they must also be less human since beings cannot by definition ignore the essence of personal being: principles and values as the very composition of being. Obviously then, it is human beings who are making decisions and drafting documents for Indigenous people and Canada Agreements, and these persons are basing the contents on personal principles and values as they are reflected in legislation, regulations, and policies. In this case, the point of the spinning top sits on the popular belief that what is happening here is a process of "nation-building".

From the time of John A. MacDonald, the concept of nation-building has justified and continues to justify crimes against humanity which remain uninvestigated: genocide, ecosystem and environmental destruction on a planetary scale, and greed beyond belief while whole countries of people starve or die because they have no resources that "our" world wants or can get. Everything we do as human beings is guided by principles and values that have come from some person or persons; the rest is words. The rest is words that we use to talk about these principles and values and to promote them to others who may not hold the same or compatible principles and values as ours.

Nation-building is about forming a new collective. However, this new collective is not alive and breathing, sharing and carrying vitality to its membership. However, it is an intellectual concept that can precipitate intense personal experiences. It gives life vicariously then because it is these personal experiences that, in their turn, fire the imagination, inspiring individuals to give up what had once been important elements of personal lives in order to take on other elements that may appear on the surface to be more vital, more alive, more life-giving. Ultimately, effective nation-building is to see philanthropy and self-sacrifice co-opted into political service.

We do not nor can we know exactly what fires inspired and drove the great mystics like St. Theresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, and we do not know nor can we know what fires drove Vincent Van Gogh and Tchaikovsky in their need to create. What then can we know about the passions and fire that drove Black Elk and Crazy Horse, Almighty

Voice and Big Bear? And what about the visions and fires that drove Louis Riel and John A. MacDonald? Nation-building has been an idea that destroyed many, and Louis Riel and John A. MacDonald are two men in Canadian history who are often discussed in relation to nation-building. Riel was the founder of Manitoba, working to build a province of equality for all the people in the western prairies. He talked of land and homes, and dreamed of freedom and peace for all people. Under his values and principles, no man died without a full knowledge of the reasons for the dying and a full opportunity to make the personal choice. He lived for and with his God. John MacDonald dreamed of a railroad stretching from the eastern shoreline to the western shoreline of the Continent. He built it for hoarding, "owning" and protecting the resources and raw wealth of the West from the United States. He also built it to subdue and destroy any Indigenous resistance to his plans for a 'new' nation that stretched from 'sea to shining sea". He lived with his personal dream of building a nation because he needed a nation. He had to have resources and the means to reward and buy his supporters if he was to stay in power and see his own plans and efforts come to fruition in his own national treasury.

It is rarely if ever stated that the notion of a national treasury was and is simply another example of intellectual wordplay intended to conceal the fact that for any prime minister of a nation, at any time or place, the national treasury is not too far from the personal one. MacDonald was not fighting for his people or his God, and unlike Louis Riel, his sanity was never questioned publicly. To build a nation in the way that MacDonald did was to most Canadians (if we are to believe the textbooks that are used to teach our children) the highest achievement in the country's history. That he built it on the backs of the most helpless and the most vulnerable is never a part of the lesson-plan, yet thousands of men, women and children died because the conditions of life that he created for them were inhuman. As for the Metis people, they never recovered from the atrocities that were perpetrated upon them as a people who lived under the smouldering anger of an ego-centred man who had been challenged by an "uppity" halfbreed Frenchman. How much more insult could an "English" prime minister take? His words ought not to be forgotten in this country, because they are the principles that shaped our origins as a nation. When the support for Riel started to flow into Ottawa from all around the world, MacDonald's

words rang out to his judges: "He shall hang, though every dog in Quebec bark in his favour"(Howard, 545). It wasn't so much Quebec that ought to sound in our ears, but his judgment publicly proclaimed and accepted even to today that Riel must hang.

How is it that the prime minister of a nation can pass judgment on a prisoner before the trial takes place and that judgment is never challenged? MacDonald made his proclamation while the courts of his 'nation' prepared to "hear" the case in a trial before a jury of "peers". How is it that the historical records can describe the actions and the words and we do not challenge them and cry out for justification and retribution? How is it that we lose ourselves as Indigenous peoples in the exchanges of words that lead nowhere but back to the same places of Batoche, Duck Lake, Frog Lake, Wounded Knee, Atikameg, Faust, Assumption, Davies Inlet, Peerless Lake, and on and on.

**Iterations of Violence**

As a part of this conclusion, I refer briefly to Charles Mair and his work *Through the MacKenzie Basin.* Here is a description of the land and people who represent the heart of my own work and, indeed, of my being. In 1899, the focus of the Canadian government was on settlement with the Indians and Half-breeds of their claims to land entitlement. The pressures to 'open' the northern territories to white interests had become obvious as had the necessity of responding to "uncontrolled exploitation" (Leonard in Mair, 1999, p. xxvii). Mair is known today "chiefly for his poems… and for his aggressive stand against the forces of Louis Riel during the Red River Rebellion of 1869-1870" (Leonard in Mair, 1999, p. xxxvii). Leonard displays no hesitation in describing the desperate Metis struggles for their lands and homes in terms of military strength and aggression i.e. "the forces" and in referring to the events leading up to the establishment of Manitoba as a province as a "Rebellion". This form of contextualization for Mair's work can easily be perceived as a clear fractal iteration of events, circumstances, and perspectives that comprised the situation of Wallace and his editorial contextualization in 1965 of the work of James Mooney Mooney in 1896. Leonard is speaking 100 years after the actual events described by Charles Mair as a government-appointed member of the (Metis) Scrip Commission in 1899; Wallace was speaking 75 years after the actual events of Wounded Knee and in his words, the "last Indian war", and the "battle of Wounded Knee" (Wallace in Mooney, 1965, p.vii). The difference may not seem significant, but the impact of

Leonard's introduction is tempered mightily by the inclusion of comments by Brian Calliou as a second part to the editorial contextualization of the work of Charles Mair. The frightening reality persists however that the power vested by the state in its agents, officials and military often takes the shape of violence directed against those most vulnerable and that those who record and interpret these events of misuse and abuse of power often provide the theoretical structures and rationale that explain away and re-name the violence. The power of the word in interpretation is obvious in these cases. This leads me to the place of violence and healing in identity formation processes and consciousness development. Nordstrom and Martin (1992) describe violence as the "part and parcel of life for millions of people who live under oppressive, repressive, or explosive politico military conditions. If we are to understand peace and conflict, it is to the people themselves, to the social dynamics and cultural phenomena that inform them, that we must turn" (p.14).

Further, the work provides a summary of "expanded definitions" that "clearly demonstrate that violence enacted is but a small part of violence lived". "There is a tendency in the social sciences to study violence when it is manifested, even while recognizing that its genesis lies in structural violence" (Nordstrom & Martin, p.8).

In the collection of essays, Bodley provides estimates that through the expansionist policies of modern nation-states to "facilitate the extraction of resources from tribal territories" (p.47), "tribal populations may have been reduced by as much as 50 million" "in the hundred years before 1920" (p.37). He goes on to describe overt genocide as it visible today in Brazil, Bangladesh, and the former Dutch New Guinea ("Anthropology and the Politics of Genocide" p.37). In his discussion, Bodley grouped anthropologists according to their positioning in relation to the political dimension of violence against "tribals". Those who advocated "evolution, development, and progress" through humane processes of assimilation and civilizing, of raising them up in cultural standards were called 'realists'. Those anthropologists who "explicitly recognized the political dimension while advocating the independence of tribals were called 'idealists'" (p.47). In the words that I would use to interpret the outcome of the debate: the realists won on the seemingly logical and humane argument that the Indigenous peoples could not be left alone, not be "preserved" as they were in their primitive state because they needed to be

included in the benefits and progress of membership within the higher and more advanced society. Bodley's conclusion was that anthropologists "watched as group after group was exterminated by government policies, yet they made no attempt to halt the violence because prevailing evolutionary theory declared that the disappearance of tribals was natural and inevitable" (p.47).

His comments I believe reflect the experiences of North American Indigenous peoples and one last quote as particularly relevant to North America: "Postcolonial development anthropologists tended to accept the conquest of internal tribal areas within independent states as inevitable nation-building progress"(p.47).

Black Elk said, "Well, it is as it is. We are prisoners of war while we are waiting here" (Neihardt, p.166). I have heard this same despair in the voices of our grandmothers. Without hesitation, always true to the ancient teachings of our own highly evolved civilization, but often with anger and the desire for what we know are short-term solutions, we inevitably complete the statement with Black Elk: "But there is another world" (p.166) as we go on in this one.

**The Urban Bush**

Many Northern Bush Metis and Cree people move into the urban settings. As my friend Sarah Price said to me one day when I told her that the city was perhaps easier to live in for Bush people simply because there you can live in solitude and build a peaceful life. She agreed, pointing out what another old friend of ours, Henry Nanooch, had said to her, " I like the city because I can figure it out in the same way that I figure out where I am in the bush way up north". She elaborated how in her experience and in interactions with other people coming into a large urban setting, the common expression that was used to describe personal feelings, often for many years, was "I feel lost". We both remembered that feeling ourselves in relation to not understanding the dynamics that made up the life of the city or, more essentially, not being able to find our own "reference point", in the terms of Joseph Patsah's people (Brody, 1981), and therefore not knowing how to draw our own map and use it.

The demographics of Indigenous peoples in the urban centres reveal a high rate of increase in the last ten years, with an anticipation that those figures will continue to rise

at alarming rate – alarming considering that the information provided by Census Canada indicates a worsening over the last three census collections rather than an improving state in terms of education, employment, housing and "justice". The public and state concern and response is voiced in terms of services: "How will we meet the growing demand for social services to address all those needs of all those Aboriginal people?"

A better way for us is to work with our elders and other Indigenous scholars in our communities to make conscious those stories that are still being held within ourselves and await the opportunity for expression in this time and space. We still see and do as the old people did in their youth, but without the forests, we struggle. Like Black Elk's Plains people whose consciousness of space and the Power that Controls the Universe struggled for expression within the confinements of fences on open land, we struggle for ways to express our being without trails and forest.

I don't believe that that is possible. Like the universality that is asserted in Black Elk's vision, all humans need the good red road, and the holy tree to flower at the center of the earth, so all humans need their own reference points from which to draw and know the maps and trails that they must travel over. They need to know how to recognize the sacred places that the Earth has put forth to remind us that we are to remember the Creator/Sacred Power and to express our gratitude.

**In Anticipation of Change**

Today several Cree communities in northern Alberta again find themselves enmeshed in negotiations with both levels of governments to define and "create" a "modern" treaty. The Metis Settlements Accord with the Alberta government (1990) provides a good outline of the essential theoretical framework of "betterment" and "raising up" that continues to underlay the government side of negotiations.

In order to participate at all in the negotiations of a "modern" treaty, the negotiators require a high sophistication of English language knowledge and information and/or an equally high degree of sophistication of Cree language knowledge and information, or they need interpreters and translators who have these skills. Inherent in this type of knowledge are an understanding of the consciousness model and the historical expression

of this model as it has been made evident by the nation of Canada in relation to the establishment of its own definitions of state security.

However, even more important and crucial to the people on the Indigenous community side of the table is a deep awareness and knowledge about our own consciousness and its consequent identity formation processes. These are and must form the basis of any such negotiations that involve land and land rights. Without the land, the northern Cree and Metis people are not.

**Synchronic Approaches to Meaning**

By our very nature, we are synchronic beings. We live our lives in synchronicity. To be conscious of that is the first step to studying and knowing ourselves. The elders are the masters of this synchronic form of study. They have perfected this system within the orality of the teachings through the Cree language. The facts of history are merely those parts that enlighten the understanding and the knowledge that evolves from synchronic analysis of these teachings. We have to know the language if we are to translate accurately or to know how to recognize the best translations that fit with our reality and our lives. We who are not fluent in the Cree language cannot use the stories to analyse and understand the realities of our lifeworlds in a synchronic fashion unless we have a Cree vocabulary that is at least sufficient to avoid the pitfalls of being led astray into a different mode of analysis and therefore a different meaning and solution.

As beings within synchronicity, we can take a piece of our life, one event, one text, and without reference to any other sources but that one event or text itself, we can come to a new understanding, new knowledge, new realizations of who we are in relation to that event or the text. It is again the exercising of the capacity to find the significant "reference point" that will then enable us to draw or read the map.

To recognize those places where history impacts on us means we need to know our history. This knowledge enlightens the process of analysis and integration of meaningful experiences and events into our lives.

To understand ourselves, we need a reference point that is from a higher consciousness than the one that is presently operative. In this way, we see the whole and we see our part in that whole and this whole is the earth. To enunciate that synchronicity is wisdom.

To know this history and the Cree language is to be able to teach others through the stories. The teachings are synchronic because the lives of the people are synchronic. The teachings are not bounded by history and language but informed and enlightened by them. Neither are the people bounded or confined to their history and language.

If the teachings are not experienced and learned as synchronic, but are bounded by history and language, then the people as a whole will not survive. The teachings will no longer offer or sustain life. The people as a whole will stagnate and the individual life from within that stagnant whole will be one of "dying" and hopelessness because the whole from which the individual draws the source of life, the substantive part of the meaning of the synchronicity of being, is no longer there.

Paradoxically, we can easily lock our identities into the confines of a lifeless history and a dead language if we lose those integral connections with the people who ensure the vitality of the language and the history through synchronic teaching. Synchronicity is the defining characteristic of our lives, and to know consciously and to live that knowledge in the expressions of our individual lives is to have a strong identity.

As connected but distinct processes, each event of our lives needs synchronic analysis exactly because we are conscious beings and we look for or constantly make order and meaning out of the analysis of each event. We do this analysis synchronically within the context of our own histories and languages, but again our consciousness of self is not confined to our history and our language competency. If we cannot find the means or the capacity to analsye synchronically the events impacting on our lives, the meaning of these events is lost to us and we cannot engage consciously in the ongoing transformation of ourselves.

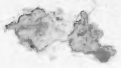
People speak and teach in stories and metaphors because these can layer meanings. Synchronic analysis is exceptionally well-suited to these multiple layers of meaning and as the child matures, s/he engages more and more deeply with the continuing evolution of meanings. To understand Cree stories synchronically and thus to be nurtured by them, the individual needs to know the language or needs a teacher to help.

Dreams and visions are a possible means of direct access to that synchronicity of being. Dreamers and visionaries and artists and ordinary people have always known and used

these and similar approaches to knowledge and have shared their knowledge and gifts with others through some form of synchronic expression that evolved from the experience itself.

## Closure

There is no greater rift to live through than that between a mother and a child who cannot share a language. The mother on her deathbed, waiting, moving slowly into the consciousness that is held within the language she heard at her mother's breast. She is completing her life with visions that require Cree words. The daughter sitting quietly beside her mother, waiting, burning, listening in English as the mother's Cree words softly break the silence of the final hours. What greater presence of language and Indigenous consciousness than this to the woman who sits alone, unable to accompany the beloved parent returning to their people of long ago. At this final moment of death, at this moment of merging with the ancestors, with the Sacred Power, with God and Jesus and Mary, a husband, a son. Grandfathers, Grandmothers.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY


Apfel, Roberta J. and Bennett Simon. 1996. *Minefields in Their Hearts* The Mental Health of Children in War and Communal Violence. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Bateson, G. 1972. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. London: Intertext.

Bateson, G. 1979. *Mind and Nature* A Necessary Unity. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, and Company Limited.

Battiste, Marie and Jean Barman. 1995. *The Circle Unfolds.* Vancouver: UBC Press.

Berger, Thomas B. 1985. *Village Journey* The Report of the Alaska Native Review Commission. New York: Hill and Wang.

Black Elk (recorded and edited by Joseph Epes Brown). 1953. *The Sacred Pipe* Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Ogala Sioux. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Blakemore, C. 1988. *The Mind Machine*. London: BBC Publications.

Bloch, Maurice. 1992. *Prey Into Hunter* The politics of religious experience. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bodley, John H. 1992. "Anthropology and the Politics of Genocide". In Carolyn Nordstrom & JoAnn Martin (eds.). *The Paths to Domination, Resistance, and Terror*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press.

Bodley, John H. c1994. Cultural anthropology : tribes, states, and the global system. Mountain View, Calif.: Mayfield,.

Bogdan, Robert C. and Sari Knopp Biklen. 1998. *Qualitative Research for Education* An Introduction to Theory and Methods. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Boyarin, Jonathan (ed.) 1994. *Remapping Memory* The Politics of Time Space. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Boyarin, Jonathan. 1994. "Hegel's Zionism?". In J. Boyarin (ed.), *Remapping Memory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Boyarin, Jonathan. 1994. "Space, Time, and the Polities of Memory". In Jonathan Boyarin (ed.), *Remapping Memory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bracken, Christopher. 1997. *The Potlatch Papers: A Colonial Case History.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brody, Hugh. 1981. *Maps and Dreams* Indians and the British Columbia Frontier. Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre.

Brown, Jennifer S.H. and Robert Brightman. 1988. *"The Orders of the Dreamed"* George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Brown, Jennifer S.H. 1992. (ed.) *The Ojibwa of Berens River, Manitoba*: Ethnography into History by A. Irving Hallowell. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.

Bull, Linda. (1991). *Indian Residential Schooling: the Native Perspective*. Department of Educational Foundations (Intercultural Education), University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Chartrand, Paul L.A.H. 1991. *Journal of Indigenous Studies* 2.2.

Chiari, Joseph. 1973. *The Necessity of Being*. Great Britain: Elek Books.

Chrisjohn, Roland David. c1997. *The circle game : shadows and substance in the Indian residential school experience in Canada*. Pentiction: Theytus Books.

Cohen, Anthony P. and Nigel Rapport (eds.) 1995. *Questions of Consciousness*. London and New York: Routledge

Crick, F. 1994. *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Dennett, D. 1991. *Consciousness Explained*. Harmondsworth: Penquin.

Dickason, Olive Patricia. 1992. *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times. Toronto*: McClelland & Stewart.

Duran, Eduardo and Bonnie Duran. 1995. *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Eccles, J. 1994. *How the Self Controls Its Brain*. London: Springer-Verlag.

Edelman, G 1992. *Bright Air, Brilliant Fire:* On the Matter of the Mind. Harmondsworth: Penquin.

Fals-Borda, Orlando and Mohammad Anisur Rahman. 1991. *Action and Knowledge* Breaking the Monopoly with Participatory Action-Research. New York: The Apex Press.

Fernandez, James. 1996. "Amazing grace: meaning deficit, displacement and new consciousness in expressive interaction". In Anthony Cohen and Nigel Rapport (eds.), *Questions of Consciousness*. London &New York: Routledge, 21-40.

Fetterman, David M. 1989. *Ethnography Step By Step*. Newberry Park: Sage Publications.

Francis, Daniel. 1997. *The Imaginary Indian*: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture. Vancouver:Arsenal Press.

Freire, Paulo (translated by Myra Bergman Ramos). 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Goulet, Jean-Guy. 1998. Ways of Knowing experience, knowledge, and power among the Dene Tha. Vancouver: UBC Press..

Government of the Province of Alberta. 1936. *Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Investigate the Conditions of the Half-breed Population of Alberta*. Dept. of Lands and Mines.

Gunn Allen, Paula. 1986. *The Sacred Hoop*. Boston. Beacon Press.

Hale, Charles. 1994. " 'Wan Tabaya Dukiara' Contested Notions of Land Rights in Miskitu History". In J. Boyarin (ed.), *Remapping Memory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Hastrup, Kirsten. 1990. *Nature and policy in Iceland, 1400-1800: an anthropological analysis of history and mentality*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hastrup, Kirsten. 1995. *A passage to anthropology : between experience and theory*. London: Routledge.

Havelock, Eric A. 1986. *The Muse Learns to Write*: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present. New Haven 7 London: Yale University Press.

Helm, June. 1994. *Prophecy and Power Among the Dogrib Indians*: Studies in the Anthropology of North American Indians. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.

Hobson,J. Allan. 1994. *The Chemistry of Conscious States:* Toward a Unified Model of the Brain and the Mind. Toronto: Little, Brown and Company.

Howard, Joseph Kinsey. 1994. *Strange Empire*: A Narrative of the Northwest. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society.

Jung, Carl (translated by R.F.C. Hull).1959. *Aion* Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Judd, Carol M. & Arthur J. Ray (eds.). 1980. *Old Trails and New Directions*: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference. Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press.

Kapferer, Bruce. 1995. "From the edge of death: Sorcery and the motion of consciousness". In Cohen & Rapport (eds.), *Questions of Consciousness*. London & New York: Routledge, 134-152.

Kohn, Tamara. "She came out of the field and into my home: reflections, dreams and a search for consciousness in anthropological method". In Anthony Cohen and Nigel Rapport, (eds.), *Questions of Consciousness*. London & New York: Routledge, 41-59.

LeClaire, Nancy & George Cardinal. 1998. *Alberta Elders' Cree Dictionary*. Edited by E. Waugh. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press and Duval House Publishing.

Marcus, George F. and Michael M.J. Fishcher. 1986. *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experiemental Moment in the Human Sciences*. Chicago & London: Universityof Chicago Press.

MacCormac, Earl and Stamenov, Maxim I. (eds.) 1996. *Fractals of Brain, Fractals of Mind In Search of a Symmetry Bond*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. .

Mair, Charles. 1999. *Through the Mackenzie Basin*: *An Account of the Signing of treaty No. 8 and the Scrip Commission, 1899*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press and the Edmonton and District Historical Society.

McLuhan, T.C. 1971. *Touch the Earth*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Moore, Pat and Angela Wheelock (eds.) compiled by the Dene Wodih Society. 1990. *Wolverine Myths and Visions* Dene Traditions from Northern Alberta. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.

Moravec, H. 1988. *Mind Children.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Nordstrom, Carolyn & JoAnn Martin (eds.) 1992. *The Paths to Domination, Resistance, and Terror*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press.

Ong, Walter J. S.J. 1977. *Interface of the Word*: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Ornstein, Robert.1992. *The Evolution of Consciousness* The Origins of the Way We Think. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Perelli, Carina. 1994. "Memoria de Sangre Fear, Hope, and Disenchantment in Argentina". In Jonathan Boyarin (ed.), *Remapping Memory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Peterson, Jacqueliine & Jennifer S.H. Brown. (eds.) 1985. *The New Peoples*: Being and Becoming Metis in North America. Canada: University of Manitoba.

Ridington, Robin. 1990. *Little Bit Know Something* Stories in a Language of Anthropology. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Schirmer, Jennifer. 1994. "The Claiming of Space and the Body Politic within National-Security States The Plaza de Mayo Madres and the Greenham Common Women". In J. Boyarin (ed.), *Remapping Memory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Segal, Daniel A. 1994. "Living Ancestors Nationalism and the Past in Postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago". In J. Boyarin (ed.), *Remapping Memory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Spradley, James P. 1979. *The Ethnographic Interview*.Fort Worth: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich College Publishers.

Strathern, Andrew, 1995. "Trance and the theory of healing: Sociogenic and psychogenic components of consciousness". In A, Cohen & N. Rapprt (eds.), *Questions of Consciousness*. London & New York: Routledge, 117-133.

Tattersall,Ian. 1998. *Becoming Human*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Company.

Vandersteen, Roger, omi. 1960. *Wabasca: dix ans de vie indienne*. Adapte du neerlandais par Jacques De Deken. Belgium: Editions D.M.I. / Gemmenich.

Van Manen, Max. 1997. *Researching Lived Experience*. London, Ontario: Althouse Press.

Vandervert, Larry. 1996. "The Fractal Maximum-Power Evolution of Brain, Consciousness, and Mind". In MacCormac, Earl and Stamenov Maxim I. *Fractals of brain, fractals of mind.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Varela, Francisco J. 1997. "Neurophenology: A Methodological Remedy for the Hard Problem". In Jonathan Shear (ed.). *Explaining Consciousness – The 'Hard Problem'*. Cambridge, Mass.: NIT Press.

Wagner, Helmut R. 1983. *Phenomenology of Consciousness and Sociology of the Life-World*: An Introductory Study. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.

Wallace, Anthony F.C. (ed.) 1965. *The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890* by James Mooney (1896). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Watkins, Mel (ed.) 1977. *Dene Nation the colony within*. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press.

Weber-Pillwax, Cora. 1999. "Indigenous Research Methodology: Exploratory Discussion of an Elusive Content". Journal of Educational Thought.

Wilhelm, Richard Translation rendered into English by Cary F. Baynes. 1950. Foreword by C.G. Jung. Preface by Hellmut Wilhelm. *The I Ching or Book of Changes*. New York: Bollingen Series xix Princeton University Press.

Wilhelm, Richard 1938. *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. Foreword by C.G. Jung. London: K.Paul, Trench and Trubner.

Wilmsen, Edwin N. (ed.) 1989. *We Are Here* Politics of Aboriginal Land Tenure. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Yazzie, Robert. 2000. " Indigenous Peoples and Postcolonialism". In Marie Battiste (ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision.* Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press.

Yoneyama, Lisa. 1994. "Taming the Memoryscape Hiroshima's Urban Renewal". In Jonathan Boyarin (ed.), *Remapping Memory*. Minnneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Zimmerman, Michael E. and J. Baird Callicott, George Sessions, Karen J. Warren, & John Clark (eds.) 1993. *Environmental Philosophy* From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Other:

Submission to Honourable Dr. W.W. Cross, Minister of Health by L. Maynard. 1937. *Plan for Settlement of Half-breeds in a Colony*.